

Illinois Issues

A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield

Who would want to run?

*Has elected office
become so onerous
that it threatens the
quality of American
governance? The
answers are
not reassuring*





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Mostly Good and Competent

The updated edition of this classic book about the Illinois governors concludes that they were a cross section of the political ideas and the social attitudes of their times.

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- Two served time
- Three beat the rap

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Peggy Rayer Long



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American governance by biasing the type of people willing to serve?" The questions are important, he concludes, but the answers "are not reassuring."

Yet Mooney manages some sympathy for the "stuff" politicians have to put up with just to get and keep their jobs.

Could such pundits point the way?

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Her first year at *The Sun*, she helped shape coverage of issues surrounding the war in Iraq, the succession battles on the U.S. Supreme Court and the controversies over warrantless wiretaps.

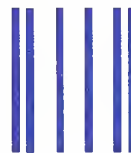
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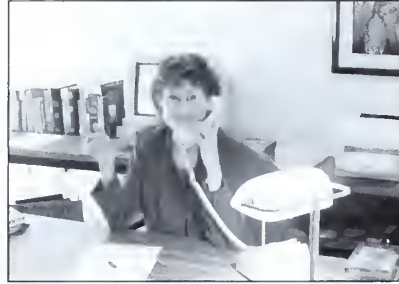
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Peggy Boyer Long



If this election got you down, there's always the next one

by Peggy Boyer Long

Let's admit it. This has been one dreary election. Even here at the magazine, where we take the long view, we're feeling out of sorts, a bit off-kilter.

The fiscal machinery of state is in disrepair, and most likely dated, yet candidates aren't disposed to offer much beyond tinkering with a few of the gears. Indictments fall like a hard rain, yet politicians suggest little more than a short dash for ethical cover.

Who, we wonder, has enough moxie to get us back on track, or enough vision to point the way.

Are there any political contenders? In this issue, which you'll likely read after Election Day, we question why anyone would want to run for office. As the campaign season staggered to a close, we encouraged political scientist Chris Mooney to consider this. You'll see he accepted the assignment in good spirit.

"Why do they do it?" he asks. "And more important, has this job become so onerous that it threatens the quality of American governance by biasing the type of people willing to serve?" The questions are important, he concludes, but the answers "are not reassuring."

Yet Mooney manages some sympathy for the "stuff" politicians have to put up with just to get and keep their jobs.

Could such pundits point the way?

Bethany Carson spoke with some of the folks you see quoted most often in political stories, and she discovered they share a couple of key traits: passion about their professional purpose and perspective on their personal role.

Political scientist Kent Redfield said, "It's taking my expertise and making a contribution to public knowledge and public debates." Then Carson notes his second thought: "That sounds so terribly pompous. I can't believe I just said that."

Similar humility in the political arena could be good.

The so-called talking heads share another characteristic: an understanding of and appreciation for the needs of the media. Good political pundits, Carson concludes, have much in common with the political scribes they aim to help.

How about journalists, then? Do they have moxie and vision when writing about the machinery of government or, for that matter, the state of the emperor's clothes? The best of them do.

This month, we'll mention three. On November 13, Kathleen Best, now an assistant managing editor of *The Sun* in Baltimore, and Bill Lambrecht, now Washington bureau chief for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, will become the first inductees in The Bill Miller Public Affairs Reporting Hall of Fame. And in

September, Charles N. Wheeler III, director of that program at the University of Illinois at Springfield, was inducted into the Lincoln League of Journalists of the Illinois Associated Press Editors Association.

We're proud to note that, over the years, these journalists have lent their talents to *Illinois Issues*.

Best is assistant managing editor for Sunday, national and foreign news at *The Sun*. She accepted that assignment last year after more than a quarter of a century in journalism, much of it spent dogging Illinois politicians for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

While in the Illinois Press Room, Best earned a reputation as a smart reporter with an analytical frame of mind, as a deceptively gentle but incisive interviewer and as a graceful writer who served her readers complex policy with a dash of political intrigue.

She also has worked for the *Quad City Times* in Davenport, Iowa, and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

Her first year at *The Sun*, she helped shape coverage of issues surrounding the war in Iraq, the succession battles on the U.S. Supreme Court and the controversies over warrantless wiretaps.

Lambrecht, a national correspondent

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for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* for some 20 years, has covered politics and the environment since 1973, starting with his stint as an intern in the Illinois Statehouse with the first PAR class. He has been on the campaign trail for every presidential election since 1984. But Lambrecht's passion is covering the environment, including the politics of water and the global impact of biotechnology.

He wrote his first newspaper series on genetically engineered food in 1986. And he has traveled to 12 countries, including India, while reporting on the global uprising over the arrival of genetically modified crops. He wrote a book on the subject, *Dinner at the New Gene Café*, and he has written about it for *Illinois Issues*.

Lambrecht and Best will be inducted into the Hall of Fame at the Inn at 835 in Springfield. Call 217-206-6084 for more information.

Longtime *Illinois Issues* columnist Charlie Wheeler is an award-winner, too. He's a pundit and journalism professor now, but he spent 24 years

with the *Chicago Sun-Times*, 19 of them in the Statehouse. He became the seventh member of the Lincoln League of Journalists, which was created in 2000 to honor "men and women who have provided exemplary service to other journalists and to daily newspapers published in Illinois."

Wheeler began writing a monthly column for *Illinois Issues* in 1984 and has been at it ever since. We once wrote that he is to us what David Broder is to *The Washington Post*: "thoughtful, respectful, compassionate — and passionate about dissecting the difficult topics of the day."

Wheeler is training tomorrow's scribes, while Redfield and Mooney are training tomorrow's pundits — and perhaps tomorrow's political contenders.

So if this election got you down, maybe the future won't be quite so dreary. In Illinois, to crib a saying from sports, there's always the next election. □

Peggy Boyer Long can be reached at peggyboy@aol.com.

Don't blink

TV news devotes seconds to politics, a new study shows

In the month after Labor Day, prime time for campaign news coverage, television news broadcasters in each of two key Illinois markets devoted less than 30 seconds in typical 30-minute newscasts to reporting on the election, according to findings compiled by the Midwest News Index, a project of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's NewsLab. The findings show that Chicago viewers got 29 seconds of election coverage in a typical newscast, while Springfield viewers got 21 seconds. The average in nine media markets located in five Midwestern states was 36 seconds. Noncampaign government news fared better, but not much. Chicagoans got 1 minute and 27 seconds. Springfieldians got 1 minute and 26 seconds. The largest proportion of air time went to advertising: 10 minutes and 26 seconds in Springfield; 9 minutes and 26 seconds in Chicago.

Beyond Illinois, NewsLab tracked broadcasts in Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin between September 7 and October 6 on ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX affiliates. The index analyzed the largest media market and the state capital city in each of the five states.

The pre-election report is the first in a series of analyses of local broadcast coverage of politics and government that will run through the summer of 2007. The project is funded by the Joyce Foundation of Chicago.

A recent survey commissioned by the foundation shows that local television news broadcasts are a leading source of information on government and politics: 69 percent of voters in the five-state region "regularly watch local broadcast news," while 58 percent read the newspaper, 32 percent use the Internet for news and 30 percent listen to talk radio.

The Midwest News Index findings will be continually updated on the project's Web site at www.mni.wisc.edu. □

Illinois Issues

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Bethany Carson



Veto session could be the calm before the storm in the 2007 legislative forecast

by Bethany Carson

When lawmakers adjourned for the summer after approving most of Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich's wish list, they left at least three major items blowing in the wind: a looming rate hike for consumers' electric bills, an expiring telecommunications law and a growing waiting list of school and road construction projects.

Those and other big agenda items got pushed off as lawmakers shifted focus to their campaigns. All 118 Illinois House seats, two-thirds of the 59 Senate seats and the six constitutional officers appeared on the November 7 ballot.

Mid-month, lawmakers reconvene in Springfield for their regularly scheduled veto session. But this fall, as is the case every even-numbered year, the session marks the end of one legislative cycle and the transition to a new General Assembly. The atmosphere will be charged with the knowledge that the veto session marks the last hurrah for some legislators.

The Senate, for instance, will lose a key education advocate and Legislative Latino Caucus founder, Sen. Miguel del Valle, a Democrat who was appointed Chicago city clerk by Mayor Richard Daley. He will leave after the veto session. The House, meanwhile, will lose Rep. Larry McKeon, a Chicago Democrat and champion of a state law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. He will retire in

If legislators stick to voting on the 11 vetoed bills through the last half of November, the 94th General Assembly will shield itself from a handful of high pressure systems brewing around the state.

January. Others will leave, too, if they lose their re-election bids.

Going into November, Democrats held a solid majority in both chambers: 65-53 in the House and 31-27 with one Independent in the Senate. Yet the post-election partisan split in the new General Assembly could have an impact on the veto session strategies of legislative leaders Senate President Emil Jones Jr. and House Speaker Michael Madigan.

How do matters stack up shortly before the election? Over the summer, only 11 measures bounced back from Blagojevich's desk with a total veto or a partial veto. Most are routine. Some deal with local issues: annexing property into mosquito abatement districts, clarifying rules about pay increases for water reclamation district board members and allowing a family business that sells alcohol and operates within 100 feet of a school to renew its liquor license if the

principal gives written permission.

But a more controversial measure the governor rejected would ease a requirement that minors who commit sex crimes be tried as adults when they turn 17. The measure, sponsored by Rep. Annazette Collins, a Chicago Democrat, would allow a judge to decide on a case-by-case basis whether minors would have to register with the state as juvenile sex offenders.

Despite the potential for controversy on Collins' measure, if lawmakers stick to voting on the 11 vetoed bills through the last half of November, the 94th General Assembly will shield itself from a handful of high pressure systems brewing around the state. The 95th General Assembly, then, would likely have to deal with them come January.

The hot-button items include measures to extend a freeze on electricity rates and to deregulate telecommunications services. Another would float bonds to fund school and road construction projects. And watch for creative ideas for generating quick cash, such as selling the state's lottery or tollway system.

But logistically and politically, those items would take a lot of maneuvering. And a six-day veto session isn't typically conducive to deliberation on such major policy proposals, especially if, as is likely, the Capitol is under renovation and fall session meetings are scattered throughout Springfield.

Still, lawmakers could face pressure to address electric rates sooner rather than later. Madigan asked the governor to call a special session on that issue before legislators return for their regular veto session November 14. Rate increases are scheduled to start January 1, before the new General Assembly is sworn in. Residential rates are projected to rise between 20 percent and 55 percent statewide, or about \$13 a month for northern Illinois customers of Commonwealth Edison and as much as \$35 a month for downstate customers of Ameren Illinois.

The rates have already been frozen for more than nine years, longer than called for in a 1997 state law. Back then, lawmakers attempted to protect customers while Illinois utility companies prepared for a deregulated system for buying and distributing electricity.

Competition hasn't flourished as intended, but the Illinois Commerce Commission worked with ComEd and Ameren Illinois this year to devise an energy auction in which electricity suppliers bid to provide energy to the utilities. As a result, in 2007 and beyond, electric rates would be set by competition rather than by state regulation.

Despite projections of financial doom from ComEd and Ameren Illinois, Democrats and Republicans approved a rate freeze in a House committee last month. Bipartisan support for the measure led Madigan to pronounce it ready for approval by the full House and Senate in an immediate special session.

Blagojevich previously said he would call a special session as soon as he secured enough votes, which would mean the support of all Democrats and some Republicans in each chamber. As of mid-October, Senate President Jones had yet to indicate whether he would call a rate freeze measure in any upcoming session.

David Dring, spokesman for House Minority Leader Tom Cross of Oswego, says it's an issue that's not going to go away. "I don't know if it's going to be tackled in the veto [session], but I do believe that when people downstate receive their power bills, it's very likely something would happen."

The debate about whether to regulate or deregulate an industry has put Illinois' telecommunications companies on alert

But the state's need for cash is likely to give life to creative revenue ideas, if not in the veto session, then surely when the next governor gives his or her State of the State address.

because that state law is set to expire in 2007. Telecommunications encompasses basic phone lines, cable, Internet and wireless phones, but the Illinois Commerce Commission only regulates rates for local phone lines.

If the state completely deregulated telecommunications, lawmakers would have to weigh protecting consumers who only use basic phone services and enticing major companies to invest in Illinois. But the Citizens Utility Board, a consumer watchdog group, says the state first needs to close the so-called digital divide between areas with and those without efficient Internet access before it lets companies tear up more streets to lay down fiber optics and other advanced telecommunications infrastructure.

Meanwhile, another issue has clouded the political scene.

The plan to find the dollars to build new roads and schools has been swept away by political storms for years. But this spring was particularly charged as Democrats crafted a state budget without the help of the GOP. It's no wonder Democrats couldn't secure the five Republican votes needed in each chamber to approve a separate capital budget, which would have cleared a 300-school waiting list and increased money for public transportation for the first time in four years.

GOP lawmakers refused to support the Democrats' plan to borrow more than \$4 billion without identifying a specific way to repay the debt. Democrats argued increased revenue from sales taxes and gas taxes would be enough to repay most of it, while Blagojevich would rely on his strategy of closing "corporate [tax] loopholes" and tapping into surpluses in special purpose funds.

The spring attempt failed on partisan

lines, but this month's post-election atmosphere could foster a little more willingness to compromise, Dring says. Yet, he adds, a capital bill is a complicated plan to put together in just six days. "I don't think anyone's concentrating on it until November 8, at least."

House Democratic spokesman Steve Brown says without Republican willingness to support a capital plan, "I doubt that it would even be discussed."

But the state's need for cash is likely to give life to creative revenue ideas, if not in the veto session, then surely when the next governor gives his or her State of the State address.

One conversation starter would be Blagojevich's proposal to sell the Illinois Lottery for \$15 billion. He would fund his \$6 billion education plan and invest a chunk to earn enough interest to maintain education funding for about two decades.

Another idea would be to sell or lease the state's tollway system, worth an estimated \$1 billion to \$24 billion, according to Credit Suisse, an investment firm. The company issued a report paid for by the legislative Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. Sen. Jeff Schoenberg, an Evanston Democrat, held public hearings all summer to discuss the possibility. He stressed his wish for the state's portion of the tollway revenue: improve roads and reduce the state's pension obligations.

Neither the lottery nor the tollway proposal, however, is expected to be ready for legislative action before the spring session.

Once January rolls around, the next General Assembly could consider the idea to open a Chicago casino, which was floated by Judy Baar Topinka in her Republican bid for governor. Topinka, a three-term state treasurer, also proposed authorizing an expansion of the state's existing riverboats to generate revenue.

Regardless of the election results, the House Gaming Committee is sure to have a busy spring session, says chairman Rep. Lou Lang, a Skokie Democrat. He expects gaming revenue ideas to seem more politically palatable to the General Assembly than raising income or sales taxes. But who knows? Lightning has struck the state Capitol before. □

Bethany Carson can be reached at capitolbureau@aol.com.

BRIEFLY

Southern Illinois home site turns out to have belonged to St. Louis founder

Archaeologists investigating artifacts recovered from the remains of an 18th-century French colonial house in Randolph County discovered the home once belonged to the founder of St. Louis Pierre Laclède.

"The French colonists were well organized and their property well recorded," says Robert Mazrim, an archaeologist at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and director of the French Colonial Heritage Project, which is sponsored by the Sangamo Archaeological Center and the Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program.

An archival search of records confirmed Laclède purchased the property in 1763, and the number and types of items found suggested a storekeeper used the property.

"It's always hard in archaeology to put faces, or put people into the past," says Thomas Emerson, director of the research program, which is a joint project of the university and the Illinois Department of Transportation. "But this is a case where we can say this is probably some of Laclède's garbage."

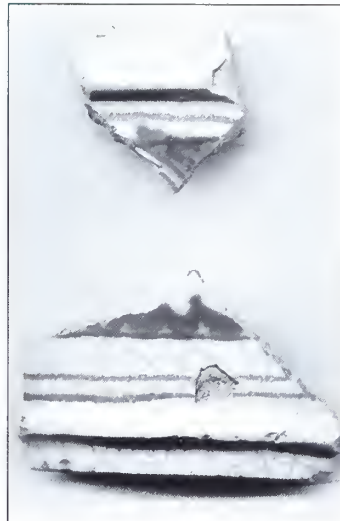
When the artifacts were first discovered in a small-scale excavation as part of a transportation department bridge project in 1998, the structure was thought to have

been the residence of a priest at the long-gone French colonists' St. Anne's Catholic Church. But Mazrim, who is writing a book about French archaeology in Illinois, says the items found in what would have been the cellar of the vertical log structure point to merchants having lived there.

Both French and British ceramics, including a creamware teapot that helped fix the dates of occupancy, were found in the cellar. Mazrim says there also were different types of bottle glass, beads for trading with American Indians, coins and lead seals used for marking bales of furs, cloth and other materials. One seal marked a bale of men's French stockings. "There's a good chance that bale of stockings was headed to St. Louis," says Mazrim.

Laclède, who was a partner in a New Orleans fur trading company, was exploring the upper Mississippi River for a site for a trading post. In 1763, he wintered over in the then-village of New Chartres, near Fort

Photographs courtesy of the University of Illinois



Fragments of a majolica drug jar found at the excavation site

A lead seal used to mark a bale of men's stockings



de Chartres. Today, the restored fort is a state historic site located four miles west of the modern town of Prairie du Rocher.

Laclède and his stepson traveled upstream about 20 miles and started the settlement he named in honor of the sainted King Louis IX of France.

Laclède laid out streets, made property assignments and governed until territorial officials arrived.

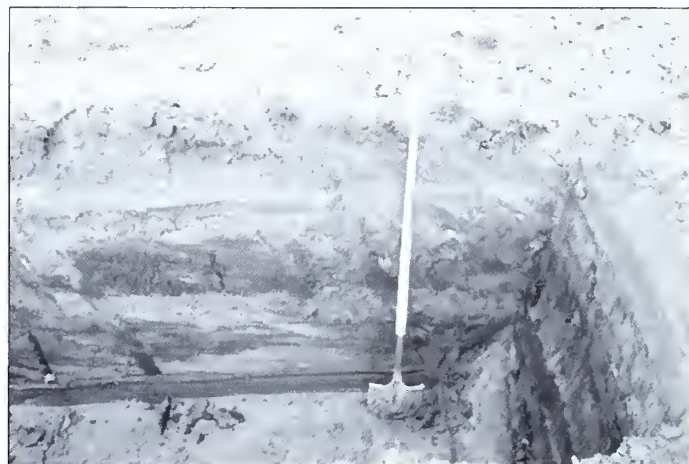
But for the first six and a half decades of the 18th century, until the British took control of the Illinois territory at the end of the Seven Years War, the French lived in the rich bottomland on the east side of the Mississippi and shipped food to New Orleans.

"This rich French colonial history has hardly been tapped in Illinois," says Emerson, "and it exists mostly in places not yet destroyed by development."

Beverley Scobell



Colonial French coins unearthed at the site of New Chartres village, now present day southern Illinois, surround a contemporary nickel.



Ceramics found at a southern Illinois dig site helped archaeologists estimate the date that a home once located there had been occupied.

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

ELECTRIC DEBATE

Politics could blunt 2007 energy rate hikes

An Illinois House committee voted to support a measure that would prevent residential customers' electricity bills from rising an average of \$1 per day starting January 1.

House Speaker Michael Madigan said last month the House Electric Utility Oversight Committee's 9-to-4 vote, with 1 voting present, was evidence that a proposed rate freeze has enough support to be approved if a special legislative session were called before the end of the year.

The measure, sponsored by Rep. Lisa Dugan, a Bradley Democrat, would freeze utility rates for at least another three years. If approved by the full House and Senate, it also would nullify a process the Illinois Commerce Commission used to restructure the way utilities buy and distribute electricity. The commission's auction was intended to allow electricity rates to be set by competition rather than by regulation, as they have been since the state enacted a 1997 electric utility deregulation law that also froze customers' rates until January.

As a result of the September auction, Commonwealth Edison's residential customers in northern Illinois face a projected 22 percent rate increase, or about \$13 more per month. Ameren Corp.'s residential customers south of I-80 could expect a rate increase of 45 percent to 55 percent, or about \$25 to \$35 more per month. Those projections fell below original estimates and would still be lower than rates paid in 1995. The new rates would apply until June 2008.

In an open letter to Gov. Rod Blagojevich last month, Madigan said the auction had "become little more than a sham procedure for tremendously profitable utility companies." He urged the governor to call a special session as soon as possible, though the General Assembly is scheduled to reconvene in Springfield November 14 for its fall veto session.

Blagojevich previously announced he would call a special session as soon as he secured enough votes — he would need all 65 Democrats in the House, all 31 in the Senate and at least five Republican votes in each chamber to reach the required votes before the new General Assembly convenes. He also would need the support of Democratic Senate President Emil Jones Jr., who has reservations.

Utility companies said a rate freeze would lead to a poor credit rating for companies.

"ComEd would have to buy power at a price that was higher than it could pass along to its customers, and that would put us at immediate financial distress and potential risk for bankruptcy," says Judy Rader, ComEd spokeswoman.

The Citizens Utility Board, a consumer watchdog group, and Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office say the 1997 law failed to spur competition or protect consumers, particularly low-income and fixed-income Illinoisans.

An appeals court is reviewing the attorney general's suit that argues the 1997 law doesn't allow the Illinois Commerce Commission to use a so-called reverse auction to restructure the way utilities buy and distribute electricity.

Bethany Carson

Super sniffer

Researchers at Southern Illinois University Carbondale have taken olfactory sensing into the world of nanotechnology. "Our research shows that metal oxide nanowires can be used as a platform for the fabrication of the next generation in the miniaturization of e-noses," says Andrei Kolmakov, an assistant professor in the physics department at SIUC.

E-noses, electronic devices that mimic the odor-sensing mechanisms of mammals and insects, have developed over the past three decades into tools used in food processing, medical diagnosis, environmental monitoring, narcotics detection and homeland security.

Other Illinois researchers also are pushing the boundaries of the technology. Joseph Stetter, a professor of chemistry at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, led a team at Argonne National Laboratory that developed the first operational sensor-array-based instrument with pattern recognition in the early 1980s. That group lays claim to coining the term "electronic nose" and named their device E-Nose. Today's artificial noses can identify thousands of smells quickly and cost-effectively.

SIUC's Kolmakov calls his research an "academic demonstration" at this point but believes the nanotechnology platform is the next step in the advancement of the e-nose. Stetter is the president of a company that sells artificial sniffing devices.

Beverley Scobell

Prosecutors indict governor's adviser

Businessman Antoin "Tony" Rezko, Gov. Rod Blagojevich's political adviser and chief fundraiser, was indicted October 11 on federal charges of receiving kickbacks and illegal fees from firms seeking business with two state boards.

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said the 24-count indictment details a "pay-to-play scheme on steroids" and a "feeding frenzy." The alleged scheme involved soliciting firms wanting business with the state Teachers' Retirement System, which manages downstate teachers' pensions, and contracts with the Health Facilities Planning Board, which oversees hospital construction.

"People were feeding at the trough of millions of dollars of money that really belongs to teachers and others whose retirements were being invested," Fitzgerald said during a Chicago news conference that was livecast on the Web.

Rezko allegedly conspired with Stuart Levine, former pension board member and former vice chairman of the health planning board. They and at least five others allegedly steered millions to campaigns, particularly in the spring of 2004. Attorneys Joseph Cari and Steven Loren and contractor Jacob Kiferbaum also were indicted. Two more remain unnamed in the ongoing probe.

Six months ago, Fitzgerald won the conviction of former Gov. George Ryan for corruption that resulted in a six-and-a-half-year sentence.

In June, Fitzgerald wrote a letter to the Illinois attorney general that acknowledged a federal investigation into questionable contracts and "endemic hiring fraud" in the Blagojevich Administration.

In a statement, Blagojevich said Rezko's and Levine's indictments show a "pattern of self-enrichment by two individuals, acting on their own, that is reprehensible." The governor has not been accused of any wrongdoing.

Bethany Carson

Governor defies drug importation laws

Gov. Rod Blagojevich expanded a state prescription drug program on the same day a special audit charged that it — along with a 2004 attempt to buy \$2.6 million in British flu vaccine — violated federal law and failed to ensure safety.

Slightly more than 3,600 Illinoisans have used I-SaveRx to import cheaper drug refills from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration didn't approve the program before or after it started in the fall of 2004. Yet Blagojevich recently invited state employees and retirees to join I-SaveRx.

In a letter to the feds, Blagojevich said, "We will not be bullied or pressured by the FDA into choosing drug company profits ahead of the basic needs of senior citizens and the uninsured."

Illinois' contract with the Canadian-based CanaRx pharmaceutical management company doesn't cost the state anything, but Auditor General William Holland says implementing the program has cost the state more than \$488,000 for 521 employees to promote I-SaveRx, \$220,000 for legal services and \$111,000 for staff to travel to Canada, among other marketing and contracting costs last fiscal year.

The audit also criticized the governor's attempt to buy flu shots from Europe without federal approval, a plan the audit says was "not adequately planned and monitored."

During the threat of a national flu vaccine shortage in the fall of 2004, the governor tried to buy an emergency supply of 700,000 doses for children, the elderly and chronically ill patients in Illinois and other states. Despite learning the federal government would supply enough vaccine by January 2005, the administration incurred \$2.6 million in costs for more than 254,000 doses from Europe's Ecosse Hospital Products Ltd.

The audit says the administration never secured written contracts with the other states, making Illinois potentially liable for all of the \$8.2 million due to Ecosse.

State Comptroller Dan Hynes refused to pay Illinois' part of the bill because the FDA did not allow the vaccine to enter the state.

Ecosse filed a lawsuit that is still pending in the Illinois Court of Claims. Illinois donated the vaccine supply to Pakistan.

Bethany Carson

Politics, money and ethics cause concern

Residents of Illinois and four other Midwestern states rank concern about the influence of money in politics on a par with concerns about schools, taxes and the economy, a recent survey of public attitudes toward political reform found.

The Joyce Foundation of Chicago commissioned an independent research firm to conduct telephone interviews with a random sampling of 2,040 adults in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin from June 14 through July 6.

Midwesterners linked reform of lobbying and campaign finance laws with government that responds to their needs. More than 70 percent of residents surveyed agreed that "unless we limit the influence of money in government, elected officials will not be able to keep their promises on issues that are important to people like me."

That response, which came from 73 percent of residents in Illinois, reflects a growing awareness and concern in this state about corruption in government, says Cindi Canary, director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform. "I was surprised, happily so, by how clearly the people in Illinois identify money and politics as a problem. They get it. They are connecting the dots."

Another concern in the Midwest is that money's influence in politics is keeping qualified candidates out of the race. More than 60 percent believe that "candidates that could represent me do not run for office because they do not have the money needed to win."

Only 28 percent said they trust government to do what is right "most of the time." The number replying "almost always" was just 8 percent.

Yet Midwesterners are not giving up hope: 65 percent reject the idea that "corruption in government will always be a problem, so trying to fix it will not make much difference," and 55 percent say their voice can be heard in state government on issues important to them.

The real takeaway from this poll, says Canary, is that people do not feel disempowered. "Although people largely don't trust their government — they feel it's not being honest with them, not being accountable — they believe they can make it so."

The survey, conducted by Washington, D.C.-based Belden Russonello & Stewart, has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.2 percent. The results, including statistics specific to Illinois, can be viewed at www.joycefdn.org.

Canary says her organization is sending the survey to state legislators. "It's important for the General Assembly to see how attuned the public is to this." *Beverley Scobell*

Joyce Foundation survey

Illinoisans are "extremely concerned" about:

Gas prices	60 percent
Health care	45 percent
Public schools	44 percent
Influence of money in state politics	44 percent
Corruption in state government	43 percent
State taxes	38 percent
Jobs	35 percent
State economy	34 percent

PARENTAL NOTICE

Court's move brings back decade-old law

The Illinois Supreme Court cleared the way for the state's parental notification law after an 11-year standstill. In late September, the court adopted rules as required by the federal court that held the law unenforceable.

The act, which legislators approved in 1995, would require doctors to notify a parent or guardian 48 hours before the procedure of a minor's intention to have an abortion. After the state's Supreme Court justices refused to write the rules for appeal by minors, a federal judge placed a restraining order on the law the day former Gov. Jim Edgar signed it.

Now that the court has crafted the rules, the law could take effect if Attorney General Lisa Madigan asks U.S. District Judge Paul Plunkett to lift the injunction, which still stands. Cara Smith, spokeswoman for the attorney general, said in mid-October that staff members were reviewing caselaw to determine what action to take.

Since 1995, six of the seven state high court justices have been replaced. Chief Justice Robert Thomas researched the notification law for several months and brought it up in the court's September term, says Joseph Tybor, spokesman for the court. "This court felt that the 1995 court was wrong, and they rectified the matter when it came to their attention — on the court's own initiative."

"It's about time," says DuPage County State's Attorney Joe Birkett, a Republican lieutenant governor candidate who sent a letter to the court encouraging it to move forward on the measure.

"In many instances, girls under the age of 18 are not mature enough to make an informed decision [about abortion], so it's usually in their best interests to have an adult involved," he says.

The notification law has exceptions for victims of parental abuse and allows judges to waive the requirement. The high court's rules adopted in September concern the appeals process when a trial judge decides not to grant such a waiver.

Interest groups on both sides of the abortion issue are keeping a close watch.

"[The law and rules] failed to ensure confidential expeditious proceedings, and they failed to take into account the realities of the situation for teens," says Lorie Chaiten, director of the Reproductive Rights Project with the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois. "The reality is that the vast majority of teens who have abortions include their parents in their abortion decision. We're talking about the ones who can't go to their parents because they're concerned about abuse or being kicked out of the house." Chaiten says the ACLU intends to oppose any effort to lift the injunction.

Birkett says he believes arguments in other courts have made it clear the law is constitutional. "As state's attorneys, we have an obligation to do all that we can to see that the laws that are on the books are enforced."

Illinois is one of 34 states that have parental notification or consent laws. The freeze on Illinois' law has made the state, in effect, the only one in the Midwest that doesn't require notification when minors seek abortions.

Vera Leopold

QUOTABLES

“What did the Republican leadership know, when did they know it and, if they knew something, why didn't they do anything to protect the child?”

U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, told the Chicago Tribune. He was referring to a scandal involving Mark Foley, a Republican representative from Florida who had sent sexually explicit instant messages to a House page. After it appeared some congressional leaders were told of Foley's missteps long before they became public, Republican U.S. House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert told reporters, "The buck stops here."

“I am now a little jaded.”

Illinois Republican U.S. Rep. John Shimkus, House page board chairman, told Chicago Sun-Times' Lynn Sweet in her October 9 column. He had read only an edited version of Foley's notes before telling him to stay away from pages.



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NARRATIVES

Through a Native American's eyes

Illinoisian LeAnne Howe recently finished four years of work on a documentary that takes an in-depth look at contemporary American Indian culture. The film, which will air nationally on the Public Broadcasting Service this month, offers much for viewers to learn. But one message turns out to be basic.

"We're not all dead," Howe says.

The professor of American Indian Studies and English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is the screenwriter and narrator of the 90-minute documentary, titled *Indian Country Diaries: Spiral of Fire*.

The film is the second part in a documentary series co-produced by Native American production companies Native American Public Telecommunications and Adanvdo Vision. Howe was not directly involved in the creation of the first part, but helped review its early stages. She was then asked to take the helm for the second part in 2002.

Howe lived for two and a half months in North Carolina while filming with the Cherokee tribe, generating about 200 hours of raw footage. The documentary is unique in that it's the first large-scale production intended for mainstream viewers in which American Indians were filmed by an entirely American Indian crew, says Howe, who has written and co-produced another documentary, *Playing Pastime*, about American Indian fast-pitch softball.

"All people behind the camera, including myself, were Native, and the people in the front of the camera," says Howe, who is Choctaw and Cherokee. "Knowing that your audience is

non-Native is a very different kind of approach."

The documentary includes multiple story lines and themes. In part, it is the story of Howe's own personal journey, she says. It also addresses economic issues, racism, health care, identity and cultural preservation.

In the title, "spiral of fire" refers to "the spirituality, the fire, that is within us all," says Howe, who also has published several novels, including a new book titled *Miko Kings*, about an American Indian baseball team in Oklahoma. "I hope mainstream audiences will understand a little bit better who we are and some of the things we are confronted with."

Howe premiered the film in late September at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. The PBS affiliate of the U of I, WILL-TV, will broadcast it at 8 p.m. on November 17. Other PBS broadcasts of the film will take place nationally throughout November, which is American Indian Heritage Month.

"I'm pleased that this film is showing in Illinois," says Howe, who joined the faculty of UIUC's American Indian Studies program in the fall of 2005. "There are a lot of [American Indian] things that aren't in this state anymore because of their removal. The film is another way of talking to people."

Vera Leopold



LeAnne Howe

From the mouths of homeless kids

Diane Nilan, an advocate for the homeless, sold her house in Aurora a year ago and set off by RV on a cross-country journey to interview homeless youth. Now, with the help of a professor and a student from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, she's turning that footage into a documentary and a short video for educators.



Diane Nilan

Nilan, the founder of a Naperville-based nonprofit organization called Hear Us, has helped run homeless shelters in Illinois for the past 15 years. She also has lobbied for legislation to protect homeless students' rights to education. When she got the idea to film homeless children as a way to raise awareness of the issue, Nilan says, "I knew I just had to do it. I couldn't sleep if I didn't."

By the end of her travels, Nilan had covered more than 20,000 miles in eight months and conducted 70 interviews, mainly with young people who are or have been homeless. She talked to kids who were living with their families in cars, motel rooms and other makeshift shelters. She says she hopes to draw attention to the problem of homelessness in a new way. "The kids themselves have an ability to deliver the message in a way that even all my passion and knowledge can't touch."

Nilan especially focused on homelessness in nonurban and rural areas, to show that the problem is a universal one. "Homelessness,

if it's thought about at all, is thought about as an urban issue," says Nilan. "It's so far beyond an urban issue."

Laura Vazquez, NIU professor of media production and theory, and an intern, senior Becca Berry, are turning Nilan's raw footage into three six-to-eight-minute videos and a longer documentary.

"I'm very interested in helping Diane put this together in a fully contextualized story," says Vazquez, who has applied for a sabbatical to devote more time to the project.

Vazquez decided to partner with Nilan after being introduced through a mutual friend. She had come close to experiencing homelessness herself many years ago, Vazquez says, and wanted to contribute her media production savvy to Nilan's project.

"When I listen to these young people talk, I think, 'My God, they have such wisdom, such insight.' It just makes you think about life in a different way," says Vazquez. "Without some compassion and love and paying attention, we forget; we think the world all looks like television commercials."

The three videos will be divided into elementary, junior high and high school segments, and will be distributed nationally for training educators and school administrators. The women hope the documentary is widely distributed and broadcast nationally.

Nilan, who plans to get on the road again this month to shoot more footage, says she's never regretted her decision to sell her home and most of her belongings.

"It at least gets me a little closer to their experience," she says. "It's given me little glimpses into what it's like to think, 'I really don't know where I'll be staying tomorrow night.'"

Vera Leopold

BOOKSHELF

Chicago: its plan, its history, its geography

By the turn of the 20th century, Chicago had remade itself after the Great Fire and created Disney-like worlds for the Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the World's Fair of 1903. But a burgeoning population had pushed the city to grow without forethought.

In *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), historian Carl Smith shows how that 1909 vision of the city not only guided its growth into a modern urban center but also influenced generations of city planners. Burnham's plan, sponsored by the Commercial Club of Chicago, a group of business leaders, called for an extensive greenbelt around Lake Michigan, parks throughout the city, a streamlined transportation system and such cultural amenities as the Field Museum of Natural History.

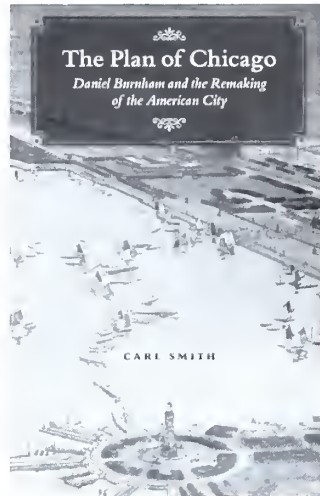
But Smith's account of how the plan was sold to the public is as captivating as the historical and political context of its creation. Archival photographs and drawings from *The Plan of Chicago* add to the story — and the plan's argument that “a modern urban center like Chicago could possess convenience, functionality, beauty and even dignity.”

Two geographers expand on that theme in following Chicago's growth “from mudhole of the prairie to world-class city” with understandable data bolstered by photographs that give the statistics meaning. In an updated fourth edition of *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), Irving Cutler weaves together the geography, history, economy and culture of the city and its suburbs.

He gives special emphasis to the role of the many ethnic and racial groups that comprise the “real Chicago” of its neighborhoods. Illustrated with nearly 300 photos, drawings, maps and tables, this is an easily digestible coffee-table book that traces demographic and societal changes and examines such problems as the environment, education, racial tension, crime, welfare, housing, employment and transportation.

John C. Hudson covers much the same territory in *Chicago: A Geography of the City and Its Region* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), but presents the story of the city's development in more textbook form, with statistical data illustrated in understandable drawings, graphs and charts. However, in a section called “Chicago Portfolio: Where Geography and Photography Meet,” 64 black-and-white and color photographs capture the iconic images of the city's landscape and its people and breathe soul into the facts and numbers.

Beverley Scobell



Illinois leads Abe's birthday bash

Eileen Mackevich of Chicago is the new executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, which is charged with planning the celebration of Lincoln's 200th birthday in 2009.

She served for 16 years as president of the Chicago Humanities Festival, leading it from a one-day event to a three-week series of events celebrating history and culture.

“Once we begin to think about what's going on in this world or why, the humanities are what help us understand everything,” she says, adding that a similar “reflective gene” could apply to Lincoln's bicentennial.

“Lincoln talked about the unfinished work that we have to do, and we want to explore all of that in terms of how we come together as a nation and as a people,” she says.

Bicentennial events will explore the 16th president and his values through music, song, art and history. There also will be public policy discussions.

Mackevich also has served as deputy director of the Illinois Humanities Council and was a broadcast journalist for WBEZ, the Chicago affiliate of National Public Radio. She was appointed to the bicentennial commission by U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, a Springfield Democrat, and U.S. Rep. Ray LaHood, a Peoria Republican, who co-chair the commission with Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer. She replaces Diane Liesman.

Bethany Carson

Turow to talk at longer state book fair

The 10th Illinois Authors Book Fair, sponsored by the Illinois Center for the Book, was expanded to three days this year and will feature more than two dozen Illinois authors. Scott Turow, an Illinois attorney who has written several best-selling suspense novels, including *The Burden of Proof*, *Presumed Innocent* and *Reversible Errors*, will conclude the event with a discussion of his book *Ordinary Heroes*.

The 2005 novel was chosen for the Springfield-area Together We Read program that encourages the entire community to read the same book and join in a discussion of it. *Ordinary Heroes* is the story of a son's quest to learn what his father did during World War II, a history of choices that brought his parents together but left a legacy his father never shared. Turow reveals the secrets through a trail that leads from old letters found after his father's death to records of his father's court-martial.

Turow serves on the state's Executive Ethics Commission and was a member of former Gov. George Ryan's death penalty commission.

The book fair will be held at the Illinois State Library in Springfield November 16-18.

UPDATES

- Gov. Rod Blagojevich convinced the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules to approve his proposed ban on the sale of snack foods in schools (see *Illinois Issues*, May, page 12).
- U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, an Illinois Democrat, introduced a measure to improve the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' handling of mental health care services for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan (see *Illinois Issues*, April, page 20).

Who would want to run?

Has elected office become so onerous that it threatens the quality of American governance by biasing the people willing to serve?
The answers are not reassuring

Essay by Christopher Z. Mooney
Illustration by Kathleen Riley Young

WANTED — *Hard-working professional for job in public eye. Requirements: public relations skills, wide knowledge of public policy issues, thick skin.*

Work conditions: long hours, low pay, short-term contract, thousands of bosses, loss of privacy.

Duties: make hundreds of public decisions involving millions of dollars with little information and intense public scrutiny. Good chance of career ending in public defeat or disgrace.

Application process: takes 12 months.

Does this sound like a job you'd want to apply for? Too bad, because it describes thousands of jobs in Illinois upon which we all depend — those of elected public officials. In fact, the employment conditions for people filling these jobs are so poor that it's surprising anyone "applies" at all. But there they are, every Election Day, people running for these offices who are willing, even eager, to take on the duties, challenges and discomforts of office.

Why do they do it? And more important, has this job become so onerous that it threatens the quality of American governance by biasing the type of people willing to serve? While we can only answer the first question by probing the minds of candidates, we can say a thing or two about the second question. And the answers are not reassuring.

So, what's so bad about being an elected official? First off, a person considering running for office must understand that Americans hold politicians in low esteem. Along with used-car dealer, polls traditionally show politician ranks at the bottom in any measure of respect — such as jobs people want their children to hold. Americans just don't like politicians in general (although people tend to like a lot of individual politicians they know personally). It's the sort of job that gives fathers-in-law heartburn and makes mothers-in-law fidget when talk at the book club turns to extended families.

More practically, consider that basic motivator of many job-seekers: money. Elected officials' pay is relatively low. Sure, the governor of Illinois makes \$150,691 per year and that isn't peanuts. But consider the duties and responsibilities of the position. A comparable job is something like that of the CEO of Target Stores, the 29th largest company in the country. The person in that position makes more than \$8 million each year. Likewise, state legislators make about \$58,000 per year in base pay these days. But for their peers — such senior-level professionals as accountants, lawyers, doctors, dentists and college professors — that's not a good income. Only those professionals working in the public sector would consider the compensation satisfactory.

Like state legislators and governors,

professionals in the public sector are willing to work for less money than their colleagues in the private sector. This is because, in addition to the pride and sense of accomplishment they receive from serving the public, these nonelected public sector professionals are willing to trade a large salary for job security. So an accountant working for the Department of Revenue may earn a lot less than her sister-in-law at that big-shot accounting firm, but she also is unlikely to be laid off at the age of 55 in a corporate shake-up.

This highlights another problem with work conditions for elected officials: job security. In short, they have none. Being an elected official means, generally, working under a two- or four-year contract, perhaps with the possibility of renewal. Of course, this is not necessarily a bad thing for the citizens who employ these folks. A little job insecurity keeps employees busy and focused, and this is as true for elected officials as it is for teenagers at McDonald's. In fact, elected officials work every day in fear of displeasing their constituents by introducing the wrong bill, casting the wrong vote, making the wrong decision or even saying the wrong word.

For example, as a state legislator, Gov. Rod Blagojevich introduced a bill that would raise the cost of a Firearm Owner's Identification card from \$5

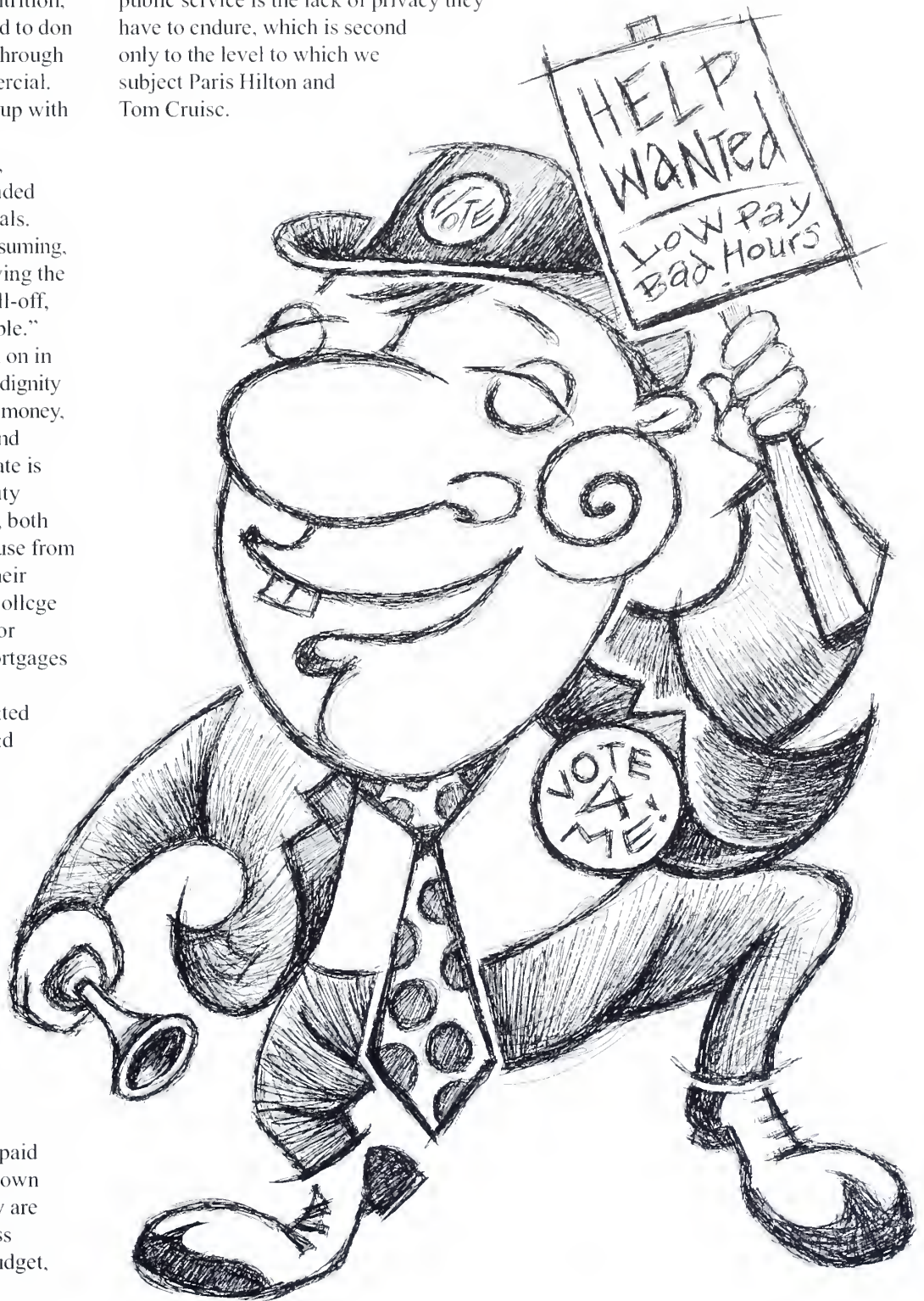
to \$500. That bill never had a ghost of a chance of passage, but Blagojevich introduced it to show voters in his very liberal, very anti-gun, North Side of Chicago district that he held their values. Little more was thought of this minor piece of legislation until almost 10 years later when Blagojevich ran for governor and his opponents used that bill to prove to downstaters that he was a threat to their way of life. As an act of contrition, candidate Blagojevich was forced to don a plaid shirt and jeans and walk through a cornfield in a campaign commercial. Is that the sort of stuff you'd put up with to get a job?

This brings us to campaigning, that wonderfully American extended "job interview" for elected officials. Campaigns are grueling, time-consuming, expensive and just plain hard, trying the patience and budgets of even well-off, energetic, outgoing "people-people." There are endless doors to knock on in cold spring and fall weather, the indignity of asking friends and strangers for money, the parades in every little town and neighborhood, where the candidate is wedged between 6-year-old beauty queens and the high school band, both of which draw much more applause from the crowd. Candidates dip into their retirement funds and their kids' college funds. It is even not unheard of for candidates to take out second mortgages to buy TV ads or more posters.

Campaigns also take an unlimited amount of time. A candidate could be out every evening talking to a group, having yet another "rubber-chicken dinner" — if he or she is lucky enough to get invitations to these. Candidates spend hours on end standing outside factory gates, going to restaurants and walking in shopping malls, introducing themselves to strangers and asking them for their votes. And this time is not free. Candidates may have to take vacation time (or unpaid leave) from work or simply cut down on their business activities if they are self-employed. All this means less money coming into the family budget,

less time at home and more stress on the family. And what if the candidate loses the election? Then all that money and time has been completely wasted. Think of what the mother-in-law has to say at her book club then.

In addition to low pay, short-term contracts, campaigning and general humiliation, another obstacle keeping some people from a career in elected public service is the lack of privacy they have to endure, which is second only to the level to which we subject Paris Hilton and Tom Cruise.



In a race in which there is any level of competition, one of the first things a campaign manager does is have an assistant dig up information about the opponent that can be used in negative press releases, ads and mailers, should they be deemed necessary.

Certainly, the private life of every elected official is not spread completely bare, but as a person rises up the political food chain, these invasions become more frequent and intrusive. Even activities that are not illegal and wouldn't affect a person's job performance might affect a candidate's chances in an election. Plus, some things can be downright embarrassing if made public.

For example, most people don't have to worry that the contents of their divorce records will be made public. But now, it seems, anyone contemplating a run for public office needs to consider whether he or she wants these quintessentially private documents published in the local newspaper.

In a highly visible example in the 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate race (names withheld to protect the innocent but you know who they are), public disclosure of divorce records not only mortified two candidates and their families, they also played a pivotal role in the outcome of the race.

One guy went from the front-runner in the Democratic primary to "who was that guy, again?" in just a few days when it was discovered that, in his divorce records, his wife claimed he once struck her on the ankle. (On the ankle? Are you kidding?) Later in the race for the same office, we found out from the Republican nominee's divorce records that he tried to take his wife on a little walk on the wild side. Icky, yes, but did it affect his ability to deliberate on oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or the Iraq War? And even though he tried to keep these records secret ("please, think of the children..."), the revelation forced him to quit the race. The Republican Party then punished Illinois voters by importing a candidate from Maryland to scold us for the next four months. Lesson learned.

More generally, two features of American public life today contribute systemically to the privacy problem for public officials. First, ever since Woodward and Bernstein brought down the Richard Nixon Administration, many in the American media have come to believe that any bad news about politicians is fair game. Of course, this varies among journalists and media outlets, and it depends (among ethical journalists) on

the extent to which an indiscretion might be relevant to the performance of an official's job. But for the same reason that car chases drive out city council meetings on the local TV news, dirt on politicians attracts viewers and readers.

The second systematic force exacerbating the privacy problem is the now-routine political strategy of opposition research. In a race in which there is any level of competition, one of the first things a campaign manager does is have an assistant dig up information about the opponent that can be used in negative press releases, ads and mailers, should they be deemed necessary. Sure, first they examine the political record: the opponent's voting record on the school board or in the state legislature and public statements he or she made on various issues and so forth.

That is certainly appropriate. These are things voters need to know because they are relevant to the decisions a candidate may make if he or she wins the election. But opposition researchers also will check out records at the county courthouse (oh, those divorce records), friends and acquaintances, and of course they will Google the opponent. Boy, does that Internet search engine make the work of political opponents easy these days.

Thus, candidates can expect (although it may not happen) that both the media and their opposition will probe the darkest crevices of their lives and expose not only things that could reflect on their political beliefs or be predictive of their job effectiveness, but anything that might seem unsavory or could be cast in an unattractive light. And as a person moves up the political ladder, even the antics of his or her family may be made public. We've seen this at the presidential level for years — certainly Billy Carter's filling-station humor and tête-à-têtes with Muammar Gaddafi gave his brother Jimmy gas in the 1970s. But these days, candidates for governor, Congress and even lower-level offices have to consider whether they want to expose their family members to the sort of scrutiny a campaign can attract. Consider the brouhaha stirred up by that \$1,500 birthday (or was it christening?) check to Amy (or was it Annie?) Blagojevich, or their father's feud with their granddad.

Voters have a right to know for whom they are voting, but who among us does not have a youthful (or not-so-youthful) indiscretion, an idiot brother-in-law or behaviors that we would not like to have described in detail on the front page of the local newspaper? The prospect of such exposure likely keeps lots of good potential candidates from running for public office.

So what's the big deal, you say? Aren't there always plenty of candidates filling the ballot come Election Day? In fact, no, there aren't, at least not at lower levels of office. Seats on library boards, town commissions and other not-so-glamorous positions regularly have no candidates running for them, and so the spots are filled through appointment. But far more pervasive and insidious is the dearth of candidates for offices clear up the ballot to the state legislative and congressional levels, where political districts are drawn or circumstances are such that one candidate is almost certain to win. This lack of true choice in elections undermines democracy.

But there is another, less obvious, effect of these roadblocks to elective public service in the United States today: a bias in the kind of people who represent us. The costs and benefits of elective office sort out the people who find it worthwhile and satisfying to run from those who do not. Consider just a few characteristics that probably have such an impact. The time demands of candidacy probably deter those people who are especially busy — such as those in their 20s and 30s raising young children or those caring for aging parents or developmentally disabled children or those running small businesses — much more than those with a little more time on their hands, such as retired people, unmarried people and students. We probably get fewer candidates and officeholders who are somewhat outside the mainstream — gay people, the disabled, people of a minority religion or ethnicity, even those who are physically unattractive — and more types that are held in higher esteem: veterans, ministers and teachers.

Candidates and elected officials might be those who are more likely than average to get a financial or psychological benefit out of self-promotion such as

insurance and real estate salespeople, lawyers and risk-takers in general. Probably fewer run who are shy, careful people whose businesses or psyches are not rewarded by public attention. Certainly the time and financial costs of seeking political office deter poor people more than those who are well-off. And those with flexible working schedules — again, such as lawyers and insurance and real estate salespersons — would be less deterred than those running a small retail or manufacturing business or working for an hourly wage. Those with a short-term view of the world and a superficial understanding of a wide range of information would be more attracted to office than those who like to bore deeply into a single issue and think about problems with a long-range perspective. And, of course, anyone who has ever done anything they would be embarrassed to see on the front page of the morning newspaper would be far less inclined to run.

Are there any intrinsic problems with these biases in the incentives and disincentives in running for office that have developed in recent years? Not necessarily. In fact, you might argue that some of those who are deterred from running would not be the sort we would want in office. But the fact that those running for and serving in office are not representative of our population at large suggests that their resulting public decisions also may be biased. For example, if officeholders are more likely to sell insurance or be lawyers than to sell shoes or be engineers, we might be less inclined to tax the businesses and activities of the former than those of the latter. This has implications for public policy and our representative democracy that are worth considering.

Sure, I've overemphasized the negatives and ignored many of the positives of public life, but the general point is valid. These are tough jobs, and we make them tougher all the time.

In the end, I can only congratulate and thank those who — despite all the obstacles that are placed in their way — do run for office and serve in the thousands of thankless, low-pay or no-pay state and local elective positions around the state. There is very little prestige in these but lots of work. We

are all fortunate to get the quality of governance we do, given the roadblocks we put in the way of it. Perhaps if we were able to reduce some of these obstacles, we would increase our pool of "applicants." And as anyone who has ever had to hire employees knows, the larger your pool of applicants, the greater are the chances of hiring a quality employee. ■

Christopher Z. Mooney is a professor of political studies with the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Springfield.



Who are the talking heads?

Political scientists say what journalists can't or won't. In the process, they tell the public why Illinois politics matter

by Bethany Carson

Illustration by Kathleen Riley Young

A handful of Illinois political scientists have landed in the Rolodexes of journalists, which gives them, at most, a soapbox for what they call public service. That is, they don't get raises or professional accolades for returning a reporter's phone call at 5:30 p.m. on a Friday.

Some admit they get a buzz from seeing their names tied to insider information or their words published in *The New York Times*, but they also laugh at themselves for the way they look and sound on television or their addiction to voting patterns and arcane policy debates. Yet, for them, the study

of politics is really a tool for change.

"Politics is to me like a plunger is to a plumber," says Paul Green, director of the Institute for Politics at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

His quick quips and Chicago accent effortlessly satisfy a reporter's need for a punchy quote. He's had practice through



26 years at Governors State University in University Park, seven years at Roosevelt University and nearly three decades at tracking elections.

Green says he's matured from "the old pro to the wily veteran" in a process he calls "political mitosis." In other words, he frequently wears the hat of an Illinois pundit, a so-called talking head.

But he and the others say they can't take themselves too seriously.

"If you think of yourself as a newsmaker, then that's just silly," says Kent Redfield, who has spent more than 30 years embedded in the capital city's political arena.

He started out as a Democratic legislative staffer for Illinois House committees. Now, he's director of the Illinois Sunshine Project, a campaign finance database, and interim director of the Institute for Legislative Studies in the University of Illinois at Springfield's Center for State Policy and Leadership. He also has an appointment in the Institute of Government and Public Affairs, a public policy research unit comprised of educators and researchers at the three campuses of the University of Illinois.

Redfield says his academic appointment comes with the expectation of performing public service. "It's taking my expertise and making a contribution to public knowledge and public debates," he says in the same breath as, "That sounds so terribly pompous. I can't believe I just said that."

But he believes it.

Offering perspective in the public sphere is his way of trying to increase knowledge among citizens, policymakers and opinion makers. It's just a small portion of political scientists' professional creed — mass education about why this stuff really matters.

Their mission comes with a few catches, including the responsibility for being an authority on everything from local taxing bodies to congressional elections.

It also means learning the quirks of media to get their messages out. In addition to accommodating reporters' deadlines and immediately returning their phone calls, the pundits must deliver succinct quotes that fortify

a reporter's hypothesis or unveil a completely different perspective. And accept it when, as sometimes happens, their brilliant interviews fall victim to an editor's pen, Redfield adds.

But these pundits agree they shouldn't always give the reporter what he or she wants. "A lot of times I have no doubt what the journalist wants the analyst to say," says Mike Lawrence, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. "It's just that I can't always accommodate them. I may disagree."

He carries on the mission of the late Simon, the former bow-tie-wearing U.S. senator, Illinois lieutenant governor and crusading newspaper publisher. Simon started the bipartisan institute in 1997 with a focus on ethics in government and civic engagement.

"We work directly with policymakers, but we're also a step removed from the process and from the heat of partisan activity," says Lawrence, who teaches political science and journalism.

While he earned a journalism degree from Knox College in Galesburg, he gained most of his expertise through the school of hard knocks. Lawrence spent 25 years as a journalist, including 14 as the state Capitol bureau chief for Lee Enterprises and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Then he switched from reporting about executive officials to representing one — he spent a decade as press secretary and senior policy adviser to former Gov. Jim Edgar, a Republican.

Lawrence has seen his name in print thousands of times, but says, "I get the biggest kick out of seeing my name in print when it comes after the word 'by,' in other words, when I've written the piece myself."

Another role for political scientists is that of translator. Brian Gaines, a marathon-running associate professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, says he tries to make political studies more accessible by cutting away the statistics and jargon, "putting ideas out there that otherwise would just circulate back in academic journals that political scientists write for each other but nobody else ever sees."

Gaines, a native of Canada, moved to Illinois from California and says he

Their mission comes with a few catches, including the responsibility for being an authority on everything from local taxing bodies to congressional elections.

naturally drank in this state's politics. Also a member of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs' faculty, Gaines adds a disclaimer that he's not a political junkie because he hasn't memorized all 118 House districts. Then again, he has gained an authority on elections and political behavior, mainly through a blend of number crunching and historical analysis.

"It's all about trying to separate different things," he says. "Is it really that George Bush's popularity is what causes Republicans to lose or gain House seats, or is that spurious and it's something else that swings who actually turns out to vote?"

Occasionally, however, he and other political scientists get questions that have nothing to do with their expertise. For instance, Gaines says he was asked to provide expert testimony about the logistics of running a political campaign.

"I said, 'Well, the truth is I've never run a campaign.'" He pointed the inquirer in the direction of a campaign professional.

He also has been asked to be an authority on breaking a tie in a student body election and on whether a farmer was wrong in a crop rotation of corn and soybeans.

John Jackson, a visiting professor in the SIUC political science department and in the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, had the opposite experience. He was recently asked a question that fit within his areas of expertise, but the reporter was the one who had stepped out of his comfort zone.

"In the initial question that he asked, it was clear that he was mixed up about the difference between the state legislature and the Congress. And we're on the air, and the camera's rolling." He politely rerouted the nomenclature and clarified the legislative election analysis.

Jackson has talked about everything from the American presidency to political parties and public opinion for 38 years. While he says he's been critical of the media at times, he's grown to appreciate their role in helping voters understand "what in the world is going on."

Feeling a compelling obligation to offer real-world perspective when possible, he says, "We've got to bring more rationality and more hard analysis to the making of public policy because it's often made by emotion and fear and ideology."

But that requires him and other pundits to be as objective and as fair as possible. And that creates the peculiar responsibility of getting close enough to Illinois politics to know the daily buzz around the water cooler but remaining

distanced enough to keep a broad perspective on how it all fits together. In short, politics is a spectator sport. Few scholarly pundits spend time in the Illinois Capitol, but they keep up-to-date by reading some of the newspapers in which they're quoted.

But the role of political scientists "isn't to spice things up or to use hyperbole," says Charlie Wheeler, longtime former *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter and current director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield. "The challenge is to make it interesting because they explain why this stuff is relevant in the everyday life of the average person."

He notes they share the same challenge as reporters, who have to simplify complex policy issues in a short amount of time or print space, all while trying to avoid losing their readers, listeners or viewers.

So the political scientists' and the journalists' relationship has an impact on the information voters have in, say, an election season.



Here they are

Brian Gaines



The Urbana resident is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with

an appointment in the Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

Background Born in Ontario, Canada, he earned a doctorate degree from Stanford University. He later became a visiting professor at the Department of Applied Economics at Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium and served on two royal commissions in Canada.

Research He analyzes elections, political behavior and political institutions by doing his own number crunching and relating day-to-day events to theory that's at least one step away from common knowledge.

Published An article in *Voting at the Political Fault Line: California's Experiment with the Blanket Primary*, 2002, among others.

Hobbies He's running marathons on all seven continents within two years, with only Australia left to do in January 2007.

Paul Green



The Chicago resident directs the Institute for Politics at Roosevelt University in Chicago, teaches a class in urban politics, serves as a political analyst

for WGN Radio in Chicago and is the program director of the City Club of Chicago.

Background He earned a doctorate at the University of Chicago before lecturing at universities in Europe, Asia and Africa, as well as teaching at

Governors State University in University Park for 26 years.

Research He studies government, politics and elections by analyzing vote returns and getting out in the field to talk to people face-to-face so he can offer a wider perspective.

Published Co-authored with Melvin Holli, *World War II Chicago* and *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition*, 3rd edition; other books.

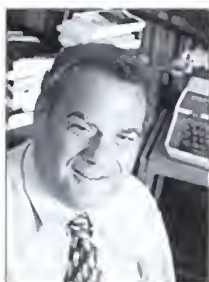
Hobbies He talks politics at the gym, at his many civic organizations and in almost every aspect of his life.

John Jackson



The Carbondale resident is a visiting professor in political science at the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Louis Liebovich is a journalism professor who analyzes the history and philosophy of media in the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He says while reporters use pundits to add credibility and objectivity to their stories, their efforts to seem independent shouldn't restrict them from venturing their own analysis. But it often does.



Louis Liebovich

He says one of his better stories from his days as a political reporter in Rockford was when Ronald Reagan came to town. He was running against Gerald Ford for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976, when Rockford was changing from a longtime conservative community to one dominated by leaders with a more moderate approach to public policy.

"You could tell by the enthusiasm and by the packed audience that Reagan was bringing almost a religious revival back to the community and checking it

with that old conservative spirit that had always driven the community," Liebovich says. "I could have called a political scientist and asked him what he thought that meant."

But he didn't. Instead, he relied on his own observations and simply pointed out how that one moment seemed to have a great impact on the community.

Offering analysis based on a neutral point of view, however, is difficult, especially in the contemporary case of Illinois' gubernatorial race, he says. The two dominant candidates — Democrat Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Republican Judy Baar Topinka — flooded the airways with negative campaign ads and tit-for-tat quotes in news stories.

"It's clearly an election based on personalities and on charges and countercharges," Liebovich says, predicting record low voter turnout for the November 7 elections.

He says while reporters use pundits to add credibility and objectivity to their stories, their efforts to seem independent shouldn't restrict them from venturing their own analysis. But it often does.

Background The Arkansas native joined SIUC in 1969 and steadily advanced in the administration until he became the school's interim chancellor in 1999. He served in that capacity for two years, then joined the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute in 2002 as a visiting professor.

Research He's gained expertise in U.S. presidential elections, Congress, and state and local government by coupling academic literature with a lifetime of study.

Published Many books, including *The Politics of Presidential Selection*, with William Crotty, and his most recent occasional paper, *The Making of a Senator: Barack Obama and the 2004 Illinois Senate Race*.

Hobbies He reads newspapers and keeps up on politics and government.

Mike Lawrence



and journalism.

Background He's a Galesburg native. Before serving 10 years as press secretary and senior policy adviser to former Gov. Jim Edgar, Lawrence spent 25 years as a journalist. He started out as a sports writer and later specialized in politics and government. He was a managing editor for the *Quad-City Times* and managed the state Capitol bureaus for Lee Enterprises and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. He received an honorary law degree from Knox College in 1998 and served on the Illinois Courts Commission and the State Board of

The Carbondale resident heads the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and teaches political science

Ethics. He was named director of the Simon Institute in 2004.

Research He has extensive experience in Illinois politics and government, reporting from the Statehouse, then working directly with policymakers.

Published Many bylines, including a syndicated political column.

Hobbies He runs up to five miles a day, six days a week and does crossword puzzles.

Christopher Mooney



The Rochester resident is a political studies professor and research associate of the Institute for Legislative Studies at the University of Illinois at

Springfield, the founding editor of *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* and

He says even the interested voters are likely to seek political information from Internet sources, such as Web logs, that reinforce their existing beliefs regardless of how factual the information is.

With no way to force voters to follow state news or to read something that challenges their ideology, Liebovich says, part of the responsibility of spreading information falls upon journalists to produce more issue-oriented news items and political scientists to open the minds of students and peers.

Punditry is one method of educating a wider audience, but political scholars also plant seeds of thought in an actual classroom.

It's not glamorous pacing in front of a group of slouching students clutching caffeinated drinks, but Chris Mooney spurs thought when he tells them about their opportunity to use states as laboratories for comparing public policies.

Mooney's many hats — political studies professor and research associate in the Institute for Legislative Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield,

founding editor of *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* and faculty in the Institute of Government and Public Affairs — show he's first and foremost an educator.

During one of his guest lectures this fall, Mooney made the students laugh by conjuring an image of a political scientist "shuffling back and forth in a bad suit." Then he paced the room in academic thought, one hand in his pocket and the other shifting from chin to waist to chin. He made sarcastic quips about corruption in Illinois politics — "This is the Land of Lincoln. You can do what you want, right?"

Earlier he spelled out his own reason for talking to the students and to the media: If things aren't going well, researchers have the ability to say, "The emperor's got no clothes."

"Cynicism about politics is the first step towards giving up power to the corrupt interests," he says. "And somebody's got to say, 'No, it doesn't have to be this way. We don't have to have a bunch of crooks running the place.'" □



on the faculty in the U of I's Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

Background He was a policy analyst for the Wisconsin Department of Development before receiving his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He lectured and researched at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom and directed West Virginia University's political science graduate studies before coming to Illinois to direct the Institute for Legislative Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

Research He compares state politics, cause-and-effect relationships of political behavior and policymaking by using states as laboratories.

Published Founder and editor of *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*, for which he received recognition from the American Political Science Association; books, including *Lobbying Illinois: How You Can*

Make a Difference in Public Policy, with Barbara Van Dyke-Brown.

Hobbies He's a musician.

Kent Redfield



The Springfield resident is a political studies professor and interim director of the Institute for Legislative Studies in the Center for State Policy and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Springfield; director of the Illinois Sunshine Project, a campaign finance database; and on the faculty in the Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

Background He earned a doctorate from the University of Washington in Seattle and became an urban specialist. He worked four years for the Illinois House Democrats as a committee

staffer, then joined the University of Illinois at Springfield to run the Illinois Legislative Staff Intern Program in 1979. He was the research director of the Illinois Campaign Finance Project, which produced the "Simon-Stratton" report in 1996.

Research He researches campaign finance and the role of money in Illinois politics and ethics through the Illinois Sunshine Project, which is funded by the Joyce Foundation. It standardizes data derived from public documents filed with the Illinois State Board of Elections.

Published Many books, including *Money Counts: How Dollars Dominate Illinois Politics and What We Can Do About It*.

Hobbies He golfs in the summer, bowls in the winter and watches any organized sport year round.

Toxic terrorism

Federal scrutiny will pick up at the nation's chemical plants, including hundreds in Illinois. But critics argue that's not enough

by Daniel C. Vock

Illinois' landscape is dotted with plants that produce chemicals for car manufacturers, plastics for medical devices and fertilizers for farmers. These sites often contain volatile or toxic substances terrorists could use to poison neighborhoods or set off explosions. Further, the state is a top producer of pharmaceuticals and foodstuffs, making it a potential prime target. Still, five years after the 9/11 attacks, managers of these industries are largely policing themselves.

"Basically these plants are stationary weapons of mass destruction spread all across the country," Democratic U.S. Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois complained earlier this year. "Their security is light, their facilities are easily entered, and their contents are deadly. Now, five years after 9/11, the federal government has done virtually nothing to secure these chemical plants."

In late September, the feds did move to close the security gap. Congress approved a measure that would, for the first time, ensure that the federal government oversee chemical plants' security efforts. The law, tacked onto a budget bill for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, requires that agency to spell out within six months the precautions chemical facilities must take.

Obama and other Democrats argue the measure doesn't go far enough in protecting Americans against the threat of terrorism.

That threat is particularly significant for Illinois, the fourth-largest producer

of chemicals in the country. Some 52,000 people work at Illinois' 745 chemical manufacturing plants. And terror attacks at those facilities could devastate communities both big and small. A handful of large industrial concerns store massive amounts of hazardous chemicals in the Chicago area, potentially affecting a million people or more in the event of an attack.

The new law specifies that each plant must identify its security risks and outline how it plans to minimize those dangers. Homeland Security officials will review the plans. The agency can inspect the facilities and shut them down or fine them \$25,000 a day for violations, but it can't require specific action.

Leaders of the chemical industry told Congress they wanted national standards for chemical plants and emphasized the voluntary efforts by its members following the 2001 terrorist attacks, including the \$3 billion the industry has spent to upgrade security.

"Security has always been a concern for chemical facilities, but 9/11 was a real paradigm shift," says Scott Jensen of the American Chemistry Council, a group of 133 large chemical manufacturers.

But the move to implement a national law for security at chemical plants stalled because of disagreements over how much power to give federal agencies and industry concerns that the law would lead to overly complex regulations. The industry ended up with a law mostly to its liking.

But Obama, who sponsored tougher legislation this spring, wanted more authority for the Department of Homeland Security. He and U.S. Sen. Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey also wanted to require chemical plants to use a strategy called "Inherently Safer Technology."

Other approaches — such as a concrete wall that can contain an explosion or sprinklers that can put out fire — are designed to reduce damage once something goes wrong. But Inherently Safer Technologies aim to minimize the risks in chemical manufacturing upfront by changing production processes.

Using that tack, a manufacturer might switch one chemical for another, less volatile one. Or the company could decide to handle dangerous materials at a cooler temperature or under less pressure. Or use a smaller amount of a volatile chemical at one time to reduce the damage if something goes wrong. Even simplifying the steps in the manufacturing process can reduce the likelihood of deadly errors.

Industry leaders say they are open to the technology. They note the chemical industry largely developed the Inherently Safer Technology approach. But they chafe at the prospect of federal regulators telling them how to make their products.

"This is not like baking a cake where you're substituting Splenda for sugar. It's a little more complex than that," says Mark Biel, executive director of the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois. "Government is good at a few things. I suspect making chemicals is not one of them."

One of the industry's chief concerns is the subjective nature of Inherently Safer Technology. Weighing safety considerations can be a complex process. Although storing less of an explosive chemical at one site could minimize the fallout in case of a fire, for instance, the chances of an accident while unloading or moving the chemical could increase.

And scientists can disagree over which technologies are safer. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), for example, were used as refrigerants. CFCs gained acceptance because they weren't flammable and they weren't toxic to humans like such alternatives as ammonia and sulfur dioxide. But the CFCs were largely banned starting in the 1980s because they damaged the ozone layer.

Nevertheless, the Center for American Progress, a liberal Washington, D.C., think tank, argues it's often cheap and easy for chemical producers to adopt Inherently Safer Technology. The group points to 284 facilities in 47 states that were dropped from an EPA list of high-risk sites after rolling out safer technology-based changes. The vast majority of them used common technologies, and half said the cost of the transition was less than \$100,000.

One of the questions left unanswered in Congress' chemical security legislation is what role states can play in regulating hazards at chemical plants. The industry wanted the federal rules to trump state regulations, but the law is silent on the issue of pre-emption.

Illinois hasn't drawn up security rules for chemical plants, but the state is working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to strengthen security in "buffer zones" surrounding vulnerable chemical sites.

In fact, the federal government for the first time last year dedicated money

specifically for protecting chemical plants, and the new law will complement those efforts, says Jill Morgenthau, Gov. Rod Blagojevich's deputy chief of staff for homeland security.

Morgenthau, a retired colonel from the U.S. Army Reserve, says the state will dole out \$3 million in federal grants to make those improvements, including new fences, barriers, cameras and infrared equipment.

"We would like the managers of the facilities to have all the infrastructure in place; however, we can't assume that they have," she says. "And, in the case

myriad state laws is troublesome for manufacturers, especially because many companies have plants in several states. Even if state laws aren't overly stringent, keeping track of the differences among states can be a complex task.

For now, chemical manufacturers in Illinois are digesting the law and waiting for the specifics the Department of Homeland Security must provide.

Chicagoan Edmund Stee, who is chairman of the American Chemistry Council's security committee and general manager of commercial services for Akzo Nobel, says his company has

re-evaluated security at its sites — including two in Illinois — and consulted with local law enforcement and emergency responders as part of that process.

Akzo Nobel produces chemicals known as surfactants at its plants in Morris in Grundy County and another southwest of Chicago in McCook that is slated to close next year. Those chemicals reduce the surface tension in water and are used in everything from laundry detergent to motor oil. They're produced from animal fat and oils

from coconuts and soybeans.

The process of transforming the raw material into the surfactants involves synthetic chemicals, too. Ammonia, hydrogen, isopropyl alcohol, methyl chloride, ethanol and formaldehyde are all used. Many of those chemicals are poisonous, flammable or corrosive.

Stee says Akzo Nobel and other producers routinely look for ways to make their operations safer. "It's just good business to reduce your risk. But a lot of places, you can't just overnight change your processes." □

Daniel C. Vock, a frequent contributor to Illinois Issues, is a reporter for Washington, D.C.-based Stateline.org and a former Statehouse bureau chief for the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.

Photograph courtesy of the Lyondell Chemical Co.



Lyondell's 400-acre Equistar Chemicals, LP, situated south of Chicago in Morris, is the state's largest chemical plant, according to the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois. The plant makes such plastic-related materials as polypropylene and low density polyethylene.

of something that's very poisonous, we want to make sure there's infrastructure in place to stop terrorists or prevent extreme accidents."

But a handful of states have taken action to pencil regulations of their own. Last year, New Jersey issued regulations requiring chemical producers there to consider implementing Inherently Safer Technology. After evaluating more than 100 sites, officials in the Garden State report that the vast majority of those plants complied with the new state rules without problems.

Jensen, the official from the American Chemistry Council, points out that his group has helped legislators write laws on the subject in Maryland and New York. But he says keeping track of

THE HITCH IN THE PLAN

A new Chicago metropolitan planning agency is advisory only, making it no more powerful than its predecessors

by Alan Mammoser

The new regional authority for northeastern Illinois has delivered an ambitious inaugural agenda to the governor and state lawmakers. The *Strategic Report on Visioning, Governance and Funding*, issued by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning — CMAP for short — promises profound changes in land use and transportation planning for that congested section of the state.

The new agency, created to guide local governments, is advisory only, with no more power than the regional agencies it replaced. And it faces the same challenge: a fragmented landscape in which a multiplicity of local authorities resist coordination. Still, the willingness to consolidate planning into one agency may signal a new era of cooperation for metropolitan Chicago.

CMAP is the result of last year's state Regional Planning Act, which ordered the fusion of two long-standing agencies: the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and the Chicago Area Transportation Study. The new agency, which combined the staffs of both organizations, replaces the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, taking up its concern for natural resource and land use planning. But CMAP broadens the agenda to address housing, social services and economic development.

On its face, the new agency appears well-equipped to provide strong leadership, with a 15-member board guaranteeing a kind of proportional

representation. Those board members come from the city of Chicago, suburban Cook County and the surrounding counties. Officials in these areas each appoint five members, reflecting the general three-way distribution of the metropolitan region's population. This makes a representative yet compact board, one that compares favorably to the catchall nature of the old planning agency's board, which had 34 members appointed by a confusing array of agencies and authorities.

Still, CMAP is not as novel as it seems. The two agencies that preceded it also began with great expectations and bold initiatives. That was 50 years ago, when auto-era sprawl was just beginning and regional planners wanted to shape

growth patterns in outer Cook, Lake and DuPage counties. And it's worth remembering that both began as formidable research and planning organizations.

The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission produced its famous Finger Plan in 1968, which foresaw suburban development oriented to the region's rail lines, the "fingers." The commission produced a comprehensive plan update in the 1970s, with multiple components covering a wide range of regional concerns. And it had some power to implement those plans, thanks to the federal government.

Back then, the feds asked regional agencies to review local government applications for such things as sewer plants, federally financed housing and open-space acquisition. The commission also exercised authority to review locals' applications to expand wastewater service areas. The required reviews often helped the commission compel local governments to adopt policies and ordinances that addressed regional concerns.

The Chicago Area Transportation Study also began with great promise, as reflected in its 1962 metropolitan plan, which became a national model for its technical acuity. Eventually, however, its plans became little more than wish lists of projects submitted by the transportation agencies on its policy committee. These were combined with vague policy statements in the federally mandated Regional Transportation Plan.

Regional Planning Act

Signed into law in August 2005

Combined the Chicago Area Transportation Study and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission

Created a regional planning board named the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

Called for a board with 15 members appointed by local elected officials from the city of Chicago and suburban Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties

That plan, produced every three years, never held much relationship to the comprehensive regional plans created by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

Persistent criticism from civic groups finally put pressure on state officials to create CMAP. The new agency aims to become the pre-eminent provider of regional information and data. That in itself is a much-needed role, one the previous regional planning agencies have fallen far short of in recent years.

But whether CMAP can advance beyond information provider to effective planner remains to be seen.

The region now sprawls into Will, Kendall, McHenry and even DeKalb counties, where local officials continue to press for an outer ring of highways to support and sustain growth. Some even want a new airport. Few want guidance or advice from an agency downtown.

The great challenge for CMAP will be to remain regional, to continually lift itself above local concerns, to speak strongly and independently for the whole metropolitan area. This will be difficult to do over the long term. After all, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission began with a fairly efficient, compact board of 19 members, the bulk of them appointed by the governor and Chicago's mayor. Later, the board was expanded to 25 and, eventually, 34 members. This gradual expansion reflected the continual pull of local prerogatives. It strengthened the position of suburban mayors but left the agency unable to effectively address such critical regional issues as housing. Many commission board members resisted any perceived intrusion into local affairs.

While CMAP as an advisory agency inherits the planning commission's weakness, it enjoys one newfound

strength: bringing the transportation planners into its fold. This should encourage what regionalists have long called for — the "integration" of land use and transportation planning. It's a fairly vague notion, but the idea is to make transportation facilities serve broader community development goals. In other words, land use planning — determining the design of communities — will take precedence.

Successful integration of these sometimes conflicting interests assumes CMAP has clear authority to set out regional transportation priorities that support its regional land use schemes.

Metropolitan area challenges

253 million hours a year residents spend in traffic delays

151 million gallons of fuel used each year in traffic jams

\$4 billion spent annually on wasted fuel

80 percent increase in traffic projected in two decades

35 percent boost in housing prices from 2000 to 2004

5 percent growth in household incomes from 2000 to 2004

2 million more people expected in the next 25 years

65 and older population expected to double by 2030

23 townships may suffer water deficits by 2020

SOURCE: *Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Strategic Report on Visioning, Governance and Funding* at www.chicagoareapanning.org

Thus, CMAP conceivably could guide regional development patterns, at least indirectly, through the placement of transportation infrastructure.

But this requires CMAP to become the one regional authority in control of the Regional Transportation Plan, with its transportation goals embedded in broader comprehensive strategies for the metropolitan region. Unfortunately, CMAP has not been given this power. The transportation planning agency's policy committee, composed of related agencies and service providers, continues to have final say over the Regional Transportation Plan.

CMAP might have asked in its recent strategic report for the dissolution of the transportation planning committee, or its subordination to CMAP, perhaps through demotion to committee status within the new agency. CMAP board members declined to do so, leaving an awkward arrangement in which the two boards must coexist.

This outcome doesn't bode well for integrated regional land use and transportation planning. The question must be revisited, with eventual certification of CMAP as the official, federally recognized metropolitan planning organization for northeastern Illinois.

Despite the enormous challenges it faces, CMAP might achieve what the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission never could. Back in 1968, the commission never intended to implement its regional plan through federally required reviews. Rather, the agency wanted to implement the Finger Plan through voluntary intergovernmental agreements, with municipalities and counties committed to meeting regional standards. Such regional-local cooperation was never achieved in a significant way.

CMAP came about through cooperation of local leaders. Municipal officials, acting through the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, were involved in its creation from the beginning. They limited its powers, to be sure, but generally they supported the idea of a new combined agency.

After decades of sprawl, the relentless spread of traffic congestion and continual environmental damage, most local leaders recognize the need for regionalism of some kind. This may signal a new era in which local officials see some sense in conforming their initiatives to regional plans. The success or failure of CMAP lies in their hands. □

Alan Mammoser, previously with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, is a Chicago-based regional planner and writer.

Institutional amnesia

Official memory keepers might help state agencies
learn from past mistakes

Essay by James Krohe Jr.

“The history of the state’s *parens patriae* role toward children is strikingly circular,” wrote historian Joan Gittens. She offers several examples. The earliest solution to raising state-dependent children, for instance, was to settle them promptly into families, with little or no further intervention from the state; after a century of trying other approaches, the federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 again favored simple familial care over state intervention. “And in the education of handicapped children,” she reminds us in a 1994 volume, “the pre-Civil War special schools’ goal of returning mentally and physically handicapped children to their communities as soon as possible finds an echo in the modern day commitment to deinstitutionalization and mainstreaming of handicapped children.”

Education, corrections, utility regulation, energy policy — each is a realm in which old policies that failed are forever being mistaken for new ones with promise. One can come to a couple of conclusions while meditating on this recurring trip back to the future.

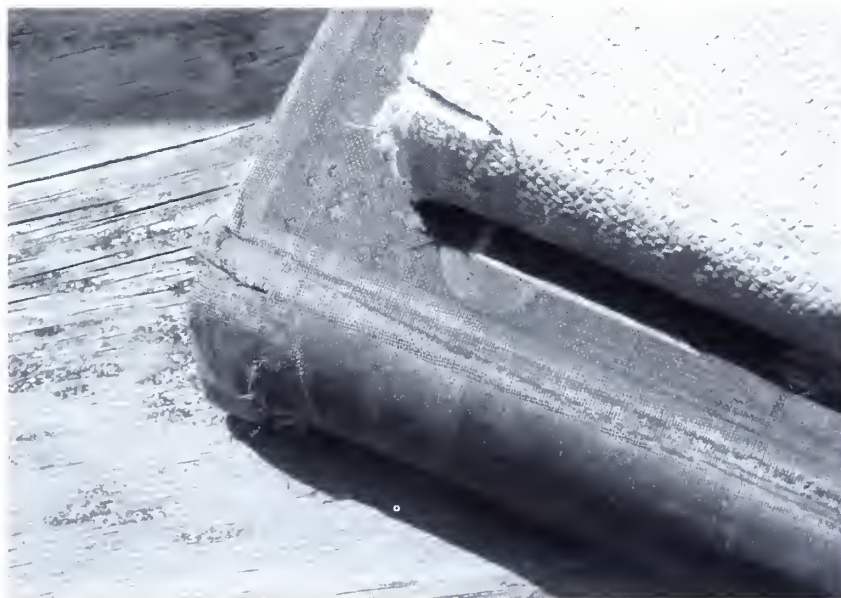
One is that there are only two basic state government solutions to each of the standard social ills — and they are both wrong. Another is that the state keeps making the same mistakes because policymakers in state departments lack awareness of their organizations’ pasts.

In general, institutional memory in Illinois state government ranges from faint to amnesic. Narrative accounts of departmental history are as rare as revenue-rich budgets. Department is used loosely here to refer to any administrative subdivision of the executive branch; narratives include interpretive records of key policy debates and the results of administrative initiatives.

Would knowing the past help keep agencies from wasting time and money and avoid avoidable errors? Would it help frame and contextualize policy debates and proposals? And how would achieving informed perspective work?

An ongoing program of applied history about state government operations would be a new species of what has come to be called “public history.” As practiced in the United States, this still-green art includes history prepared for a public unused to complex fare. It is public historians who, increasingly, concoct museum exhibits, staff the more ambitious local historical societies and manage the archives of major business corporations. The larger aim of public history is, as one of the movement’s early leaders once put it, to apply the “scientific knowledge of history in the practical affairs of today.”

Running state government is certainly a practical affair. But who might assemble this scientific knowledge? One nominee might be in-house historians — not archivists but proper, trained historians whose role would be to search,

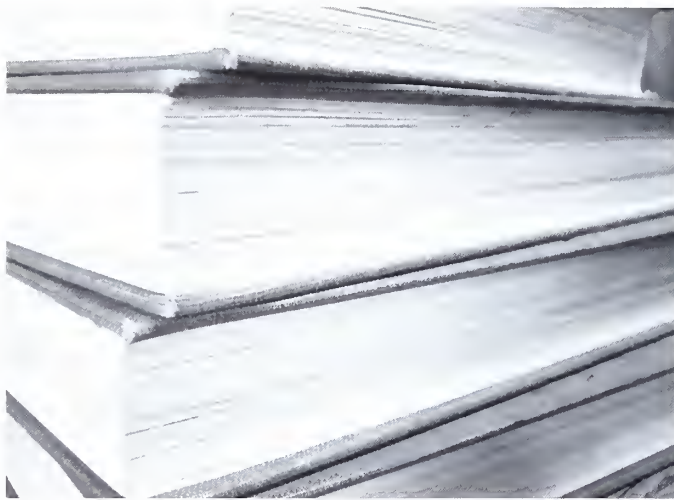


reflect upon and reveal the past to inform the present. Such scribes probably should not be regular department employees. Insulating state-paid historians from meddling by their masters is crucial.

Thucydides, it should be remembered, was able to write the first objective history — the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, a chronicle of conflict between Sparta and his native Athens — only because he had been exiled from Athens. His successors ought not to be appointed by department heads whose work they would eventually pass on but by someone else — perhaps a nonpartisan commission set up for the purpose. Under such a scheme, department historians would serve in the same relationship to the bureaucracy that U.S. Supreme Court justices have with the executive and legislative branches.

Any student of the 20th century will pause before endorsing any kind of official history. Wiser it would be, perhaps, to look to an outside body, to guarantee that history is used neither to apologize to the present nor to propagandize the future. The state library? A friendly foundation? The Better Government Association? Veterans of Illinois' policy wars argue for each. William Furry, executive director of the Illinois State Historical Society, thinks the academy is the place to look. "One of the state universities, say UIS [the University of Illinois at Springfield], might become the institutional memory for state government and its various entities," he says, "with the state endowing chairs of departments for this purpose."

Independence is a necessary condition for the work, but hardly the only one. The risks to an embedded historian would be scarcely less than those facing an embedded reporter. Each would-be court historian would be distrusted by the authorities on whose protection she depends. As is the ease on any battlefield, much of what really determines outcomes during a policy war goes on where the historian can't see it. And there is always the risk of identifying with helpful low-level combatants — the career middle-management staff



members who are the bureaucracy's equivalent of noncoms — to the detriment of one's objectivity.

Writing department history would be a daunting job in narrow professional terms as well. One would need technical proficiency in such areas as oral history and archival management and, of course, some grasp of the broader currents of history in which state government gets caught up. One also would face the further constraints of working in, if not for, a state of Illinois bureaucracy. The American Historical Society notes that public history in general requires an understanding of different audiences (and the ability to communicate with ordinary people), along with a willingness and ability to work with others, which describes department life to a fare-thee-well.

I will borrow a jibe from corporate gadfly Nell Minow. Though she refers to private-sector executives, it fits public-sector executives, too: They are like subatomic particles, in that they behave differently when they are observed. The prospect of a historian lurking behind the coffee machine, aspiring to become the James Boswell to the administrator's Samuel Johnson, would leave many of the latter sweating like an alderman in front of a grand jury. Mike Lawrence, former press secretary to Gov. Jim Edgar, worries that the prospect of confidential advice being used in a frank account of controversial program-making might have the unintended consequence of discouraging people from entering it into the public record, and thus, eventually, into the

historical record.

Without that kind of knowledge, however, we would know the what but not the why. "The history of rules and regulations," observes Jess McDonald, director under four governors of the Department of Children and Family Services, "is like the wrapping paper on birthday presents. It hides what is inside."

Some pertinent materials won't be put in the public record, and some ought not

to be. "There are several levels at which stories need to be understood," explains McDonald, whose former agency is one of those where policymaking can be a life-or-death matter. "Some things cannot be said publicly. The debate about whether or not to settle or fight a court action, for instance, is one of the most important discussions that takes place in human services, but these privileged communications take place outside the public view. It actually should be that way."

The biggest problem with establishing a program of public history focused on executive policy is that the people who need such a program the most, and who have the authority to put it in place, would want it the least. Providing context, clarity and focus in the political discussion, says Bill Furry, would be invaluable to the media and to historians writing about government. But he adds, "Politicians, I suspect, would find it burdensome."

Is there not history enough about Illinois state government? Politics, governors, constitutions, the General Assembly — these are the preoccupations of academic historians. Institutional histories of departments and other state bodies (apart, of course, from the legislature, universities and a handful of prisons and hospitals) are rare. A good one is *Poor Relations*, Joan Gittens' history of the state of Illinois' care of orphaned, disabled and delinquent children, which was quoted above.

Biographies and other studies of lowly administrators, laboring in neglected

vineyards straggling for lack of light, are even more rare. This is unfortunate, as such people can wield more durable influence in state government than most governors. This was especially true in the early days of the commonwealth, when much of state government was still a malleable infant. One such is Stephen Forbes, who beginning in the 1870s served the state well as curator of what was then the Illinois Natural History Society Museum and later as the longtime chief of the Illinois Natural History Survey. Forbes deserved and got a decent biography — *Stephen Forbes and the Rise of American Ecology* — but as the title suggests, the focus is on his career as a scientist (Forbes played what has been described as an important anticipatory role in the development of ecological studies) not as a public administrator.

In the absence of more formal accounts, we must glean what insights we can into the life of a state administrator from other published sources, such as memoirs. An entertaining example of the latter is “In Service to Clio,” which was published as part of a posthumous collection titled *On a Variety of Subjects*. In it, Paul Angle reflected ruefully on his tenure in the 1930s and ’40s in charge of the Illinois State Historical Library. On securing his annual appropriation: “It turned out to be easy. One found out who really ran the show — usually no more than half a dozen men — one became acquainted, and the job was done.”

Not many department heads write as well as Angle. Indeed, few write anything at all about their time under the lash. Perhaps we should demand that retiring agency heads submit a memoir to the state library as a condition of their pensions. A few have at least talked about it. Back when it was Sangamon State University and mindful of its mission as a public affairs university, the Oral History Office of the future UIS recorded the recollections of several dozen executive branch officials and other veterans of state politics as part of its Illinois Statecraft project. The roster includes directors under various governors of the departments of Aging, Agriculture, Business and Economic Development, Finance, Public Welfare, Revenue, the Bureau of the Budget and the Illinois Environmental Protection

Agency. Alas, these sadder but wiser veterans are not as illuminating as one might wish on matters of policy and program administration. This is not unusual. Most ex-civil servants will tell you that state service was the most demanding, and sometimes the most gratifying part of their working lives, but seldom the most interesting.

Assuming such chronicles were assembled under some aegis, would they be read? Frank Beal, an alum of the Thompson Cabinet, says it would be useful to know the issues that have been addressed, how they were resolved and why. As he puts it, “Any department head worth appointing would surely find it of value.” Yes, but what about department heads not worth appointing? The purpose of policymaking in the state of Illinois is not wisdom but efficacy, defined politically or programmatically, and briefings that recall what is possible, rather than what is desirable, will find more favor with most incoming administrators.

Policy of consequence these days is made by half a dozen legislators and a few high-ranking administration executives, the latter usually members of a governor’s campaign. It is during and for the campaigns that most new policy is generated, borrowed from think tanks or whichever interest groups are paying the candidates’ bills. These new ideas — if they are new — are then imposed on the departments. It is a rare governor who will ask department careerists whether a policy is wise or prudent or politic (which depends on which kind of governor is proposing it). In any event, patronage extends so deeply into the administrative structure these days that there are few senior career administrators who enjoy the clout to speak up against a misconceived initiative; informed silence is as useless as uninformed silence in shaping events.

Even if our policymakers were to become educated, would it matter? Would policy proposals be altered or abandoned in light of historical evidence that they had been tried and failed? No administration will willingly abandon a program promised during a campaign merely because those policies are shown to have failed in the past. Besides, it is the

Policy of consequence these days is made by half a dozen legislators and a few high-ranking administration executives, the latter usually members of a governor’s campaign.

arrogance of each new administration to assume that if their good ideas failed in the past, it must have been because of funding or political interference or lack of commitment; *they* can make them work this time.

It should be noted that the notion of state-financed official history is itself something of a throwback. It is typically Progressive in its assumption that information — not money or influence or ethnicity or doctrinaire religion — should be the basis of government decision-making. The better — meaning the more comprehensive, the more accurate, the more disinterested — that information is, the more likely good decisions about policy will result.

The Legislative Reference Bureau was founded in that hope in 1913. Among its more extreme advocates, such bureaus were seen as (in the words of a historian of the movement) “harbingers of the millennium.” This was extravagant. The bureau’s role was to make lawmaking more efficient, which it has done admirably. But wiser? Wisdom comes in the application of knowledge to public problems, not knowledge itself, and it is likely to be no different if that knowledge is historical. □

James Krohe Jr. is a veteran commentator on Illinois public policy issues. A frequent contributor to Illinois Issues, his most recent piece, Déjà vu, an essay on recycled energy policy, appeared in October.

Latino Senate leader to take city clerk job

Sen. **Miguel del Valle**, a Chicago Democrat and assistant majority leader in the Illinois Senate, was appointed by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley to serve as the next Chicago city clerk. Pending council approval, del Valle would replace **Jim Laski**, the clerk convicted of taking kickbacks from trucking companies that bid for city contracts. He was sentenced to two years in prison as part of an ongoing federal investigation.

Del Valle would leave the Illinois General Assembly after the November veto session and after nearly a decade in the Senate.

Born in Puerto Rico, he is the first Latino to serve as assistant majority leader in the Senate. Del Valle founded the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation, which has grown to 13 senators. As vice chair of the Senate Education Committee, he has been a prominent advocate for education funding reform.

"Perhaps most important, he's a man of unquestioned integrity who will run the clerk's office as he runs his Senate office — honestly, efficiently and effectively," Daley said in a printed release.

UPDATE

Prosecutor named and prisoner gets more time

Rodger Heaton was officially appointed U.S. attorney for the central district of Illinois based in Springfield. Nominated by President George W. Bush, Heaton has served as interim U.S. attorney since December 2005. He replaced **Jan Paul Miller** when he returned to private practice.

Scott Fawell, already serving six and a half years in federal prison for aiding convicted former Gov. **George Ryan**, received two and a half more years for a bid-rigging scheme that happened while he ran the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, called McPier.

Fawell's fiancée, **Alexandra Coutretsis**, received four months for her participation in covering up the scandal.

A woman of firsts

Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female U.S. Supreme Court justice, received the first Lincoln Leadership Prize from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation last month. The annual award will recognize a lifetime of service in the Lincoln tradition, said Jim Edgar, former Illinois governor and current chairman of the foundation board.

"Justice O'Connor has led an exemplary life dedicated to justice and the rule of law," Edgar said in a printed release, "and her determination to break through every barrier to service at the highest levels of government has proved her to be a role model for men as well as women in America."

Nominated by then-President Ronald Reagan in 1981, O'Connor served on the Supreme Court bench until she retired this year. The Stanford Law School graduate previously served as assistant attorney general of Arizona and was elected to three terms as an Arizona senator, becoming the first female state majority leader in the nation.



Sandra Day O'Connor

Photograph by Dane Penland, Smithsonian Institution, courtesy of the U.S. Supreme Court

Veteran historian joins Lincoln library, museum

Rick Beard begins this month as executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. He replaces state historian **Tom Schwartz**, who stepped in as interim executive director after the resignation of founding director **Richard Norton Smith**.

Beard also will serve on the commission planning to mark Lincoln's 200th birthday in 2009, as well as head fundraising for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation.

He previously served as executive director of the Atlanta Historical Society, where, according to a printed announcement, he raised \$35 million and oversaw the grand opening of the Atlanta History Museum. He later served as chief operating officer for the New York Historical Society.

While leading Illinois' Lincoln library and museum, Beard will remain president of a nationwide project to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War to be held 2011 to 2015.

He's also writing a book about the history of presidential campaigns.

State jobs official resigns

John Gianulis retired from Gov. Rod Blagojevich's hiring agency in late September. Gianulis declined to comment when reached at his home last month, saying only that he had worked for government since 1958.

Gianulis has been reported as saying that his departure had nothing to do with a federal investigation of hiring practices by Gov. Rod Blagojevich's administration and more to do with the tiring drive between Springfield and Andalusia, his home town in Rock Island County.

He campaigned for Blagojevich during the governor's first run in 2002 and became deputy director of intergovernmental affairs and personnel when Blagojevich took office.

The governor's office also declined to comment on Gianulis' retirement.

Gianulis will remain as Rock Island Democratic Party chairman and president of the Illinois Democratic County Chairmen's Association.

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

Big people on campus

Ron Michaelson, visiting assistant professor of political studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield, will offer his expertise in state campaign finance as a trustee for the Campaign Finance Institute at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Michaelson brings state and federal experience to the appointed post. He was executive director of the Illinois State Board of Elections for 27 years until his retirement in 2003. He also served on an advisory committee of the Federal Elections Commission and as chairman of the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws.

He will remain in Springfield at the university's Center for State Policy and Leadership.

Larry Matejka, executive director of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, will retire in December after more than 26 years overseeing student loans, grants and scholarships to help students attend college regardless of income.

Commission Chairman **Donald McNeil** said in a statement that Matejka has played "an instrumental role in the development and growth of nearly every federal and student grant and loan program," benefiting millions of students.

The first in his family to attend college, Matejka says, "I've just always felt that I had some kind of an obligation to make education an opportunity for people."

Right out of graduate school at Michigan State University, he directed financial aid at Illinois State University in Normal. Then he went to Washington, D.C., to help the U.S. Department of Education research and develop the Pell Grant program, which issues federal aid to college students.

Matejka returned to this state to head financial aid for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before joining the commission in 1980.

The agency is currently considering selling all or part of its nearly \$4 billion student loan portfolio. Matejka says the proposal by Gov. Rod Blagojevich's administration should be approached with caution. "You have to be careful not to do away with an asset or a resource that's going to inhibit your ability to perform [outreach] services," he says.

The board plans to choose a replacement by the time Matejka leaves at the end of the year.

Louis Hencken, who has been president of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston for six years and with the administration on that campus for more than 40, will retire this coming June.

"I firmly believe that there is a natural rhythm to academic institutions like this one — a time to begin and a time to end," Hencken said during a special board meeting in late August.

He began working in student affairs as a graduate assistant and gradually advanced from director for student affairs in 1975 to vice president for student affairs in 1992. He became university president in 2001.

His contract ends June 30, 2007, but he said he would stay on board until a new president can start.

Jennifer Richeson, a social psychology professor at Northwestern University in Evanston, is the lone Illinoisan among 25 recipients of this year's MacArthur Foundation "genius award" fellowships.

She has researched the impact of stereotypes and prejudices, including the psychological barriers to interaction among racial groups.

She and the other recipients were chosen to receive unrestricted fellowships for showing exceptional creativity and the potential to do more original work. Her track record includes a psychology degree from Brown University and a doctorate degree in social psychology from Harvard University.

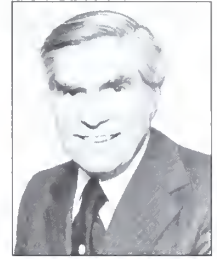
Prior to becoming a faculty fellow at Northwestern's Institute for Policy Research, she was a visiting fellow at the Research Institute for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University and an assistant professor of psychological and brain sciences at Dartmouth College.

BIT

Seymour Simon

The former Illinois Supreme Court justice died September 26. He was 91.

Throughout more than 30 years in public service, Simon gained notoriety for opposing all death penalty cases on principle and for bucking the Democratic machine in Chicago and Cook County government.



Seymour Simon

He began his political career as

Chicago's 40th Ward Democratic alderman in 1955 and was appointed to fill a Cook County Board vacancy in 1961. He became board president in 1962 but didn't win the backing of Democratic Mayor Richard J. Daley for another term. Simon returned to the Chicago City Council in 1967, then was elected to the Appellate Court in 1974. He got elected to the state Supreme Court in 1980.

His eight-year tenure as a Supreme Court justice marked a turning point in the state's judicial history. Edward Burke, Chicago's 14th Ward alderman, said in a statement. "He showed that his actions and motivations sprung solely from his own reservoir of great personal courage when he took controversial stands such as his early opposition to the death penalty, many years before such an opinion would gain a wider degree of public acceptance."

He also sided with Republicans in ruling that former Gov. James Thompson won a third term in 1982 by 5,074 votes and a 0.1 percent advantage over Adlai Stevenson III.

Chief Justice Robert Thomas said in a statement that Simon was a man of passion and ideals who was never afraid to speak his mind, and that he leaves a legacy still felt within the court.

Upon earning his law degree from Northwestern University Law School in 1938, Simon worked in the U.S. Justice Department's Antitrust Division. He then served three years in World War II with the U.S. Navy before returning to Chicago to practice law.

LETTERS

Follow up article with suggestions to help

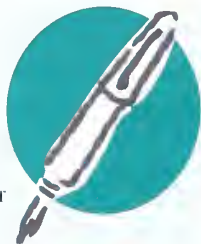
I was shocked to read your article "Left behind: young, black and male" (see *Illinois Issues*, September, page 16), which indicated that neither an economic boom nor poverty programs had much effect.

What does Mr. Joiner, in his analysis, suggest to do to help the situation? Can't wait to read his suggestions.

*Anthony Spina
Elmwood Park*

Write us

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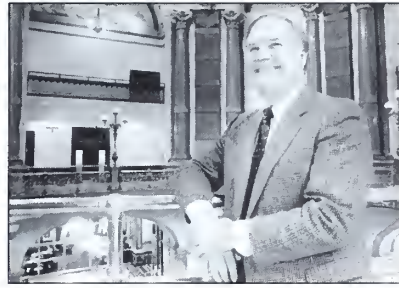
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Charles N. Wheeler III



Perhaps there's perverse pride in topping accounts of corruption elsewhere

by Charles N. Wheeler III

*In a more reflective moment,
though, one has to ask why
Illinois seems to be such
a fertile breeding ground
for official misconduct, and
more important, what toll
does such enduring rot
take on the body politic.*

remain free while he appealed his convictions for racketeering conspiracy, fraud and other offenses. Instead, the judge said Ryan, a Republican, must report to prison January 4 to start serving a six-and-one-half-year sentence.

That's a "two-fer" few other states can match.

In more reflective moments, though, one has to ask why Illinois seems to be such a fertile breeding ground for official misconduct, and more important, what toll does such enduring rot take on the body politic.

In response to the first question, some political scientists point to the state's individualistic political culture, which views politics as a kind of marketplace, in which practitioners pursue personal interests rather than the common good.

Reporters are a talkative lot, so when a bunch of them get together, they swap a lot of war stories. For those covering state government, a favored venue is the national conference of Capitolbeat, the Association of Capitol Reporters and Editors. And when Illinois scribes recount the misdeeds of our elected leaders to their colleagues from elsewhere around the nation, the reaction is pretty standard — eyes open wide, jaws drop and expressions of incredulity abound.

Every storyteller likes to captivate an audience, of course, so perhaps there's a perverse sense of pride in being able to top just about any account of government corruption elsewhere with the latest from Springfield or Chicago.

Consider one notable three-day span just a few weeks ago. First, federal prosecutors on a Wednesday announced the indictment of Antoin "Tony" Rezko, one of Gov. Rod Blagojevich's top fundraisers and key advisers, for shaking down investment firms wanting to do business with the agency that administers pension plans for suburban and downstate teachers. The Rezko indictment may be the tip of the iceberg, as the feds also are looking into administration hiring and contracting practices. Indeed, the FBI's top man in Chicago, Robert Grant, termed it a "gathering storm" and said investigative efforts were "ongoing, methodical, aggressive and relentless."

Two days later, a federal judge rejected former Gov. George Ryan's request to

Politics is all about power, jobs and contracts, not ideology or community values. Big city and smaller county political machines flourish, rewarding friends and punishing enemies. Campaign contributions, not policy analysis, shape government decisions. And members of the public seem to go along, just hoping to get their piece of the action. Call it the Illinois way of doing business.

That's probably as good a broad-brush explanation as any. But what effect does such endemic, bipartisan chicanery have on civic life in Illinois?

In a brochure titled *The Cost of Corruption*, the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform suggests a number of serious consequences. Corruption undermines the legitimacy of the political process, the reform group argues, and as people lose faith in the system, they become less likely to participate in such activities as voting, running for office or aspiring to careers in government. With a shrinking talent pool for government work, the quality of public services deteriorates as jobs and contracts are awarded based on partisanship and clout, rather than merit, in a sort of vicious cycle.

Polling data suggest folks aren't quite ready to drop out yet, but they are disillusioned with the commitment of state political leaders to meaningful reform. For example, in a *Chicago Tribune* poll released less than a month before the November gubernatorial

election, a plurality said neither major party candidate, Democrat Blagojevich or Republican Judy Baar Topinka, would do a good job of cleaning up government. Responses were not included in that poll for Green Party candidate Rich Whitney, a Carbondale attorney.

Moreover, though most of the polling occurred before the Rezko indictment, almost two-thirds said Blagojevich failed to keep an earlier campaign promise to end political corruption, and some 60 percent said his administration's corruption level was the same as that of previous administrations.

Though the paper didn't analyze the responses, one supposes the governor's supporters might conclude the political rot is so pervasive — should the Rezko allegations prove true — that not even a well-intentioned reformer like Blagojevich has been able to root it out.

The Rezko indictment likely came as no surprise, though, to Blagojevich critics, many of whom view him as a hypocritical opportunist who parlayed

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Still, Illinoisans aren't ready to throw in the towel on good government, another survey suggests. Three-quarters of respondents rated honesty as the most important value they wanted in state government in a poll conducted last summer for the Joyce Foundation, a longtime reform supporter. Asked

whether corruption was so ingrained that reform efforts would be futile, 60 percent disagreed, but almost three-quarters said that unless the influence of money in government were limited, elected officials would not be able to keep their promises on important issues.

By similar margins, respondents said that proposals backed by the reform campaign would make government work better, including ones requiring lobbyists to disclose more details about their activities, providing public financing for some campaigns and barring judicial candidates from taking contributions from interests that may have cases in their courts.

Those measures, along with others to sever pay-to-play links between contributions and contracts, should head the agenda when the 95th General Assembly convenes in January. Illinois' long-suffering voters deserve no less. □

Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

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election, a plurality said neither major party candidate, Democrat Blagojevich or Republican Judy Baar Topinka, would do a good job of cleaning up government. Responses were not included in that poll for Green Party candidate Rich Whitney, a Carbondale attorney.

Moreover, though most of the polling occurred before the Rezko indictment, almost two-thirds said Blagojevich failed to keep an earlier campaign promise to end political corruption, and some 60 percent said his administration's corruption level was the same as that of previous administrations.

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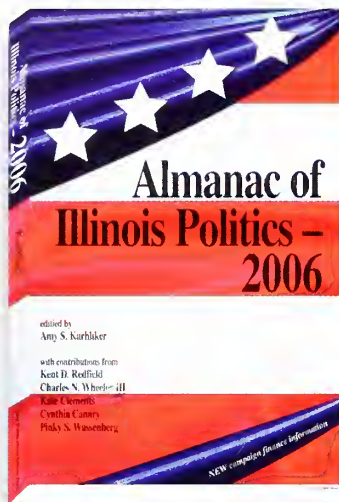
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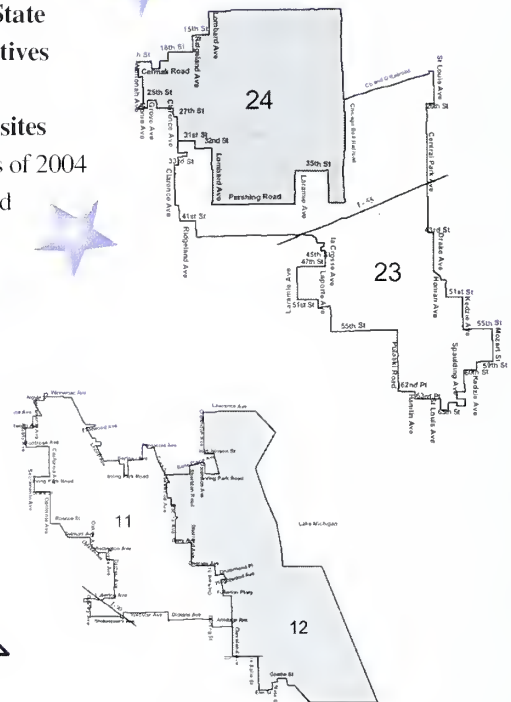
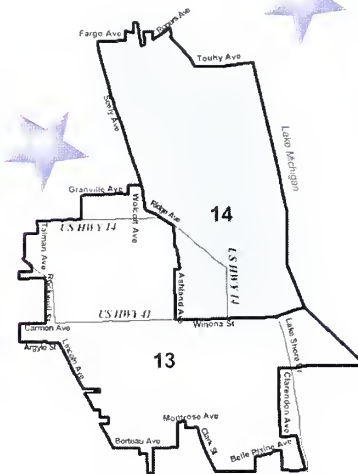
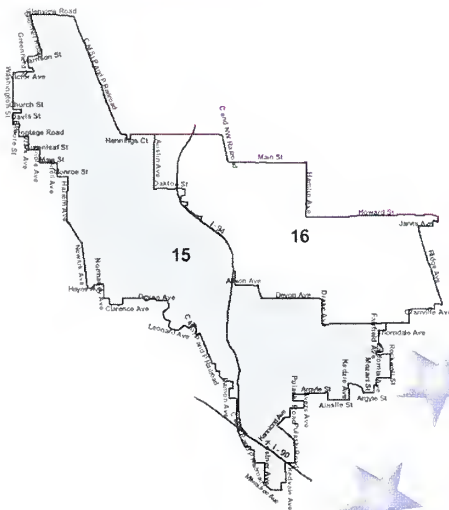
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